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THE WORLD'S VERDICT

MARK · HOPKINS, JR.

THE WORLD'S VERDICT

A Novel

THE WORLD'S VERDICT

A NOVEL

BY

MARK HOPKINS, JR.

BOSTON
TICKNOR AND COMPANY
211 Tremont Street
1888

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I Dedicate this Work

TO MY FRIEND,

MR. ISAAC HENDERSON,

WITHOUT WHOSE ENCOURAGEMENT IT WOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN WRITTEN.

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THE WORLD'S VERDICT.

CHAPTER I.

THE Harding family had stopped in Paris to do some shopping. Six weeks before, on their way from Germany to England, they had stopped in Paris for the same reason.

All routes, from the north to the south and back, had, in the case of the Hardings, led to Paris and shopping; and the accumulations of many such journeys could be seen in a large number of boxes which stood in the hall, outside the Hardings' doors, and were thickly placed about their various bedrooms. They had, besides, many other boxes stored in various towns in Europe, containing bric-a-brac of every description, — the accumulation of seven years' constant travel in almost all parts of the Eastern Hemisphere.

When Mrs. Harding saw an antique treasure, in the shape of old silver or embroidery or even a copper-pot, she said first, "It's lovely;" next, "I wish I had it;" next, "I can't afford it;" and finished with buying it. Every new article which came home caused the faithful Irish maid Nora to groan, for it meant closer packing, and perhaps another box.

They carried many small articles with them, and with these Miss Leslie Harding beautified their *salon* whenever they made a stop for any time, thus making it a most attractive place to look at. It was also a most attractive place to be in, for Mrs. Harding was a very interesting and vivacious talker, and Miss Leslie a dignified and beautiful girl, who could talk well too, if she chose.

Mrs. Harding was seated at a table, writing; Miss Leslie was standing in front of a mirror, with her head on one side, in that contemplative attitude which a new bonnet renders necessary at intervals for several days after its purchase.

Mrs. Harding laid down her pen, and turning in her chair said, "Leslie, I don't like it."

"I think the crown a little high, myself, Mamma."

"I don't mean the bonnet, child; it's well enough. I was thinking of Stanley Munroe. Why does n't he call?"

"Dear me, I don't know!" said Leslie, in a tone which implied that she thought the looks of her hat the more important subject. "I suppose he does n't wish to; why should he?"

"You know perfectly well, Leslie, how intimate he was with us last winter at Pau, and that he even wanted to go with us to Egypt."

"Yes, I remember," said Leslie; "and also that he went back to New York with the Masons, and spent the summer with them at Lenox."

"He went back," replied Mrs. Harding, severely, "to take possession of the property which his uncle had left him; and he is now, I understand, very rich."

"Is that the reason he is living in the Latin Quarter in chambers?" asked Leslie, as she carefully placed the bonnet back in its box.

"I presume he lives there to amuse himself."

"Very well, Mamma, do let the poor man dwell in peace; certainly life in the Latin Quarter, if the books are right, is more spicy than anything we could offer."

"He is probably studying art, or something of that sort," replied her mother, boldly contradicting her first statement. "At any rate, I have written a note asking him to dine with us."

She looked at her daughter a little doubtfully as she made this announcement, but Leslie said nothing. She was too familiar with her mother's manœuvres to combat them. Sometimes they amused her, and sometimes they jarred on her sensitive nature, and made her more than ever reserved in her intercourse with men.

Stanley Munroe had been no more attentive to Miss Harding than had a dozen others, and his movements interested her very little. She was twenty years old, and for her age was remarkably well balanced and mature. While Leslie loved her mother she often secretly dis-

approved of her methods; and so far her father was the only one to whom she had given entire confidence and affection.

Mr. Harding was proud of his tall daughter, and humored her in every way. She had developed under his careful training, in seven years, from an ungainly girl into a graceful self-contained young woman. He had taught her to sit her horse in matchless style, and had trained her mind till she looked at life in quite a different light from most young ladies of her age. Sometimes Leslie regretted this, for she was often bored when other girls seemed amused; but, thanks to her mother, she had every society grace and accomplishment, and could hold her own, if she were inclined, against any of them. Her face in repose was perhaps a little hard in its lines, but when she smiled these softened, the cheeks dimpled, and the parted lips showed the fascinating gleam of pearly teeth. She dressed exquisitely, danced with more than ordinary grace, and had never known what it was to lack the attention which so many girls covet in vain. Altogether, Miss Harding was quite a

type of the best sort of society girl, in danger of being spoiled by indulgence and worldliness, but as her youthful cousin Fred expressed it, "of the right sort after all."

Both her daughter and husband often provoked Mrs. Harding beyond endurance by saying nothing, when she wanted and expected what she called "argument." She made an impatient movement with her chair, and began, "Well, Leslie," when, with the scant announcement of a slight tap, the door opened, and Fred Maning entered.

"Hullo, Aunt Harriet! how are you Leslie?" said he, and without waiting for a reply to his polite inquiries, dropped into a chair, and continued, "Where do you think I've been?"

"Into no good, I'm sure," replied his aunt.

"Yes, I have; that is, unless you call Munroe's rooms bad. I've been there."

"Have you?" said Leslie, quietly; "we were just speaking of him. How did you happen to go there?"

"Well, I was over the river in the Latin Quarter."

"What were you doing in the Latin Quarter, Frederick?" interrupted his aunt, in a disapproving tone.

"Why should n't I?" exclaimed he, regardless of the form of her question. "It's more interesting than this everlasting Champs Elysées. No end of antiquity shops, Aunt."

"Really?" said Mrs. Harding, in a changed tone.

"Go on, Fred," said Leslie: "you were in the Latin Quarter—"

"Yes, looking up antiquity shops and learning my Paris, when I ran across Munroe. Awfully pleasant fellow, Munroe; insisted on my going up to his rooms, where he set out cigars and —and things."

"And what things, Fred?"

"Oh, cigarettes and pipes,—all kinds you know," said Fred, recovering.

"Were his rooms handsome?" asked Mrs. Harding.

"No; pretty bad for a man with his income. But he had some nice things in 'em,—pictures, and that."

"Is he in a hotel?"

"No, in chambers, — a dining-room, salon, and bedroom. The place looked clean, but it's awfully high up, and the queerest old chap to wait on him; looked at least eighty, and infirm at that. Munroe says he keeps him because he's cheerful. He grinned like a Cheshire cat all the time he was in the room, but it looked to me quite as like idiocy as cheerfulness."

"What can induce him to live like that?" murmured Mrs. Harding.

"You'd better ask him; he's coming to call to-night."

"Oh, is he?" and turning to Leslie, "Fortunately I need not send the note."

"No," said Leslie, quietly, "I am glad you were saved the trouble. Fred, you had better go and dress for dinner."

"Oh, bother!" said Fred, impatiently; "I'm blessed if I see any use in dressing in an old hotel. Where's Uncle George?"

At this moment Mr. Harding entered from the next room. He had a small flat box in his hand, and as he came forward said in a

despairing tone, "Harriet, I wish you 'd look at these coins. It took me two days to arrange them, and now see them; it 's really too much!"

"Well, George, I can't help it; you *will* leave them about."

"But I did n't; they could n't get mixed unless some one opened the cover."

"Well, I know nothing about it; ask Nora."

"Papa, are you very angry?" inquired Leslie, in an insinuating tone.

"Yes."

"I 'm awfully sorry," she said, "but I did it."

She was standing near the window in a contrite attitude, and as he turned and looked at her, the expression of real annoyance which his face wore slowly changed, and in its place came one of loving admiration; but in his voice the keynote of complaint was unchanged as he said, "How did it happen?"

"It was on the table, and the key caught in the lace of my sleeve. I 'm *so* sorry; but I 'll rearrange them all, truly I will."

"You! Arrange them in chronological order! You won't know enough till you're forty."

"Papa, dear," she said, coming to him and putting an arm about his neck, "don't you think you'd better get ready for dinner?" and she led him submissively from the room.

CHAPTER II.

AFTER dinner the family assembled in the salon. There was a bright wood fire in the grate, before which was spread a large fur rug. Two lamps shed their mild rays over the flowers and ornaments which Leslie had arranged on the tables. Over the sofa and one or two easy chairs were spread bright embroidered stuffs. The dreary air of a hotel salon was quite dispelled, and one felt the atmosphere of home.

Mrs. Harding sat at her table, writing. When there was nothing else to do she wrote letters. There were few idle moments in her life. Seeing the advantage of social success, she worked toward that end; every detail was attended to, and success came. Agreeable herself, with an attractive daughter, an indulgent husband, and plenty of money, she had, in the seven

years passed in Europe, added to her list many persons worth knowing, and these were never allowed to forget her. Accepting no attention which she could not repay, she had won an independent position, and could now select her acquaintances.

Even careful English matrons, who declared that there were Americans and Americans, apparently placed Mrs. Harding in the latter class, for she never lacked invitations to good English houses. A vulgar American was perhaps a little worse in her eyes than a vulgar Englishman, but she honestly meant to exclude both. If any of the latter kind were on her list, they were Englishmen whose vulgarity had descended to them with their titles. In regard to women she used to say, "One can never quite tell who an Englishwoman is by her looks, but one glance at an American is sufficient."

Since her daughter had come to a marriageable age, Mrs. Harding had manœuvred to throw eligible men in her way, — quite openly and as a matter of duty, talking about it just as she would of the selection of a costume or of a plan

for amusement. One got from her manner, and habit of rapid change in subjects of conversation, an impression of frivolity; but on acquaintance, one found that her frivolity was intelligent. She knew perfectly what she was about.

The dictum of society was Mrs. Harding's law; she could forgive almost anything which it did not condemn. Judging everything from a perfectly worldly standpoint, she was sometimes out of sympathy with her husband and daughter, who occasionally acted independently of her judgment; but she ruled her husband with an iron rod up to the point where experience taught her that her power ended and his will would assert itself.

Mr. Harding, with his coins spread out on another table and a book of reference in his hand, was patiently redoing the work which Leslie had undone, while she was working listlessly on one of those huge pieces of embroidery which seem forever unfinished. Fred, lounging in an easy-chair, and at intervals pulling vigorously at what bade fair, later on, to be

a mustache, was describing the fine points in a certain game of lawn tennis, in which his personal skill was not forgotten, when a servant brought in Mr. Stanley Munroe's card, and that gentleman shortly followed.

He was tall and rather thin, dignified in bearing, with finely cut features, short brown mustache and hair, and open-looking dark-blue eyes. In correct evening dress, with a fur-lined overcoat thrown over his arm, he looked very little like a Bohemian of the students' quarter, which part he was supposed to be playing. He bowed in a general way to every one as they rose to receive him, and crossing the room shook hands with Mrs. Harding, who said, —

"We began to think you had forgotten us."

"No, indeed," he answered, taking the chair which Fred had placed for him; "on the contrary, I think you are the only persons who could have tempted me from my den. You know I belong to the lower classes just now, and feel myself quite out of place in a salon like

"Yes, Fred has been telling us of your chambers on the other side. I suppose you are studying something?"

"No, nothing; unless perhaps human nature."

"Do you find your friends in the lower classes particularly amusing and instructive?" asked Miss Leslie, in her most frigid manner.

Munroe's face flushed a little as he turned to answer. "Not very instructive perhaps," he said quietly, "but so far very amusing. No doubt I shall tire of the life soon; indeed, it 's already a little monotonous."

"One reads rather queer tales of the students' life over there," said Mrs. Harding; "is it really so bad?"

"No, not necessarily bad; indeed, I think on the whole it 's more innocent than that of the average society man. Most of the students are workers, which is saying a good deal; many of them are really clever and agreeable, while a few are enthusiasts and men of real talent."

"Ah!" said Leslie, "I wish I could meet a young man of that kind."

"Much better not, my dear," said her mother,

"they are apt to run on in such a wild way; wait till they've made their reputations. One has to meet them then, and it's quite soon enough."

"I think I should like to see a little of the life over there," said Mr. Harding, pausing in his work and speaking for the first time.

"Nothing easier, Mr. Harding," replied Munroe. "Come and dine with me to-morrow night, and I'll show you one of the most celebrated brasseries in the Quarter. It's a resort of artists and literary men; but you will probably see Bohemians of all kinds if you choose to stay through the evening."

"I think there's no reason why I should n't go, is there, Harriet?"

"No, my dear; on the contrary, I hope you will, and take Fred with you — if Mr. Munroe will include him. Madame Gordon and her daughter are coming in, and we shall have music; which I know you both hate."

"May I go along, Mr. Munroe?" asked Fred, eagerly; "I should like it above all things."

"Of course you may; delighted to have you,"

he answered heartily, for Fred was a boy after his own heart.

"And why, I should like to know, are Mamma and I to be left out of the invitation?" asked Leslie, mischievously.

"Of course you 're included, Miss Harding," answered Munroe with rather an alarmed air, "if you and Mrs. Harding care to come; but you know it 's scarcely —"

"Don't be frightened," she replied laughing, "I have n't an idea of accepting; but I wished to be invited. I suppose it 's as near as I shall ever get to the men of enthusiasm and talent."

"I think I can honestly say that your disappointment is n't equal to their loss."

"Oh, thank you; that 's very pretty, and I 've no doubt it 's true."

"No, really, I did n't mean a stupid compliment; but contact with true refinement is a rare thing with most of these men, and one that the best of them miss and long for very much. But I 'm inclined to think that Teresa, who owns the café where we are to dine, would inter-

est you more than the students. She could exist in no place but Paris. It 's really a pity you can't see her."

"Is she so attractive?"

"Yes; and for some reason I 'm a prime favorite of hers, and was honored the other night by an invitation to escort her to the theatre."

"Really!" said Leslie, with rather a peculiar accent.

"Did you go?" questioned Mrs. Harding in a tone which implied, "Of course you did n't."

"Yes, I accepted. Daudet had sent her tickets for a box at the Odéon."

"Daudet, the author?"

"Yes; and she was very proud of it. I do wish you could see her. She is fat, not fair, and considerably over forty."

There was a change of expression on both the ladies' faces at this description.

"But how did Daudet happen to pay her this compliment?" asked Mrs. Harding.

"Probably he was an old habitué of her place. All her customers remember Teresa kindly, and I assure you she has a great many whose names

are well known in the world. No one can tell how many struggling geniuses she has fed on trust. Some of them never pay, but I fancy she loses very little."

"And so she asked you to escort her?" said Leslie, who was getting interested.

"Yes; and the box having three places, she asked also a young Russian artist, another of her favorites,—a fellow, by the way, quite of the type you are so anxious to meet. We two consulted, and came to the conclusion that having accepted, we must do something for Teresa in return."

"What could you do?" asked Mrs. Harding.

"It was a little difficult; but we finally decided to ask her to dine with us before the theatre, and told her to take her choice of all the restaurants in Paris."

"Was n't that going a little too far? Suppose she had chosen a well-known place, and you had met friends there?"

"I should n't have minded a bit, I assure you," he answered smiling. "I think my friends would have taken her for a wealthy aunt, or something of that kind. She was as pleased

as Punch, and appeared, when we went for her, in a black velvet cloak, black gloves, and a most stylish and becoming bonnet. She marched through her own café in this gorgeous array, bowing in a benign and rather patronizing manner to the poor people who could only afford a two and a half franc dinner in a brasserie, and stepped into the cab with the air of one accustomed to doing this sort of thing every day."

"What restaurant did she choose?" asked Fred.

"That was a matter which seemed of great importance to her. She had a contest between sentiment and the desire to appear in style at Voisin's. She confessed to us that about fifteen years before, on a similar occasion, she had dined at Magny's, which was then, as now, the best place in the Quarter. Sentiment conquered, and we went to the scene of her early triumphs. I really never had a better dinner, nor a more amusing one. We consulted her in the selection of each dish, and the result was perfect. Her airs were delicious. At each new course she said: 'Gentlemen, it is too much, I cannot eat

more;' and immediately proceeded to devour everything before her. Her face fairly beamed with content; but she remembered her dignity, sat very erect, and never once laughed aloud. By the time coffee was served, what with eating too much and drinking fully as much as was good for her, she had a color like a young girl, and a decided tendency to become garrulous."

"And you men laughed at her, I suppose," said Mrs. Harding.

"Indeed we did n't! she was quite too impressive. I wish you could have seen the air with which she congratulated the proprietor on the quality of his wines and cuisine, which she declared was quite as good as fifteen years before."

"How did she behave at the theatre?" asked Leslie.

"With the greatest dignity and propriety. It was a dreary five-act tragedy, in which every one had a most heart-rending time of it; and she sat in the front of the box, her hands clasped, and the tears coursing down her fat cheeks. She entered as thoroughly into the misery of

the play as she had into the enjoyment which preceded it, and tells the story of both to-day with great zest."

"I think she's a nice old thing, and I'm much interested in her," exclaimed Leslie.

"I'm very glad if I have n't tired you all with the length of my story."

There was a polite murmur of dissent from every one, but the truth was that Mrs. Harding had been bored. The doings of people outside her own class interested her very little. She did not know how "the other half" lived, nor did she wish to.

After a little general conversation, Munroe rose to go. As he was putting on his overcoat he said, —

"One of my objects in calling to-night was to ask you all to dine with me at Voisin's on Thursday evening, and to go afterwards to the Théâtre Français. It's a classical night, — Molière, I believe, — and I have a box."

"How perfectly delightful!" exclaimed Mrs. Harding. "It is very kind of you, and places are so hard to get on subscription nights."

"I'd like to be excused," said Fred; "that is," suddenly remembering Voisin's, "after dinner. I think the Pantomime at the Eden is better adapted to my knowledge of French."

"By all means take your choice," laughed Munroe.

"I'm not at all sure that Molière is proper for Leslie," said Mrs. Harding, doubtfully; "but she must see the classical pieces, must n't she, George?"

"I doubt if Molière will hurt her after the Opéra Bouffe you took us to the other night," answered her husband.

"Very well," said Mrs. Harding, not at all seeing the sarcasm; "then, Mr. Munroe, we accept."

"I'm much pleased, I'm sure;" and as he bowed himself out, "to-morrow night, then, I shall expect the gentlemen at my rooms at seven."

After a moment Mrs. Harding said: "I think he's much improved; don't you, Leslie?"

"I think him a very good specimen of his kind, Mamma; but I'm rather tired of the kind."

"What do you mean, child?"

"Only that in our life one sees so many rich and idle young men. If they know anything, they're usually too lazy to use their brains, and one can't respect them; and if they don't, they're simply unbearable."

"They are made, my dear, to help us have a good time," answered Mrs. Harding, practically; "and you need n't fly in the face of Providence."

"Yes, I suppose they are; but one gets a little tired of a good time, and I wish I could meet a new species. Papa, dear, do you think there are any more men left of your kind?"

"I'm of a very commonplace sort, Leslie. The care of a daughter has given me experience and gray hairs; but no one of you knows what a fool I was when I was young."

"You're a dear," cried Leslie, taking his head between her hands and kissing him; "and I wish there were n't another man in the world."

"Well, that's ingratitude, after I brought you all that candy, yesterday," said Fred.

"You!" she answered; "you 're nothing but a boy."

"A crushed boy, too," he said, meekly. "I 'll go to bed and see if I can't grow."

After Fred had gone they sat silently, until Mr. Harding, taking his precious box under his arm, went to his room.

As Leslie folded her work, preparing to follow his example, she said, "I 'm sorry you said you 'd go, Mamma."

"Why?" asked her mother, in a surprised tone.

"I think Mr. Monroe made up the invitation on the spur of the moment," she answered.

"Well, what if he did? Is that your only reason?"

"No."

"What is it, then?"

"Because," answered Leslie, hesitatingly.

"'Because' is no reason," exclaimed Mrs. Harding.

But Leslie, if she had any other, did not give it; for picking up her gloves, and kissing her mother, she cut off discussion by going to bed.

CHAPTER III.

IF Stanley Munroe belonged to either of Miss Harding's divisions of rich and idle young men, it certainly was not with those who have no brains. With these he was well endowed. In college he had been an independent thinker, and shown marked ability as a writer and debater on philosophical subjects.

For a time, after being graduated, he had devoted himself to politics, and had been so far successful that he was elected from one of the New York City districts to membership in the State Legislature. There he did some hard work on one or two minor committees, and was in a fair way toward advancement, when some measure came up where he deemed it his duty to vote against his party; and the vote happening to be a close one, he was saddled with the responsibility of their failure, and met with an

overwhelming defeat when next his name was brought forward in party caucus.

Since that, he had apparently joined the host of rich and idle young men. His idleness was due partly to inertia, but more to disappointment and disgust. For the past two years he had been knocking about the world, gaining more or less experience and knowledge, it is true, but in his heart dissatisfied with his life. He had a charming manner of his own, coming from a genuinely sympathetic nature, and had always been a favorite with both men and women. As yet, he had never met a woman who had roused anything more than a feeling of passing interest. Perhaps Miss Leslie Harding had come nearer to it than any other, because he thought he had seen beneath the surface of her manner a greater strength and independence than most of the girls of her class possessed.

Monroe's present life, taken up for amusement, was rapidly disgusting him with idleness, and giving him fresh ideas as to the relative value of money and brains. He found men in Paris working with all their might for the

attainment of some ideal in art, literature, or science, living from hand to mouth year in and year out, cheerful under constant failure, and making his retirement at the first disaster seem altogether cowardly and unworthy. He believed in himself, but half dreaded a renewal of life's battle. Without being a dreamer, he was drifting he knew not where.

Mr. Harding and Fred were prompt in keeping their engagement on the appointed evening, and the ancient Seymour — porter, maid-of-all-work, and valet all in one — showed them cheerfully up the somewhat precipitous climb to the fourth floor, his parchment countenance involved in its usual polite smile.

They found Munroe standing in front of a bright wood-fire in his salon. The shades were drawn. On a round table burned a lamp and two candles. An open book showed how he had been occupying himself. In the day-time the place might have had rather a dreary look, for the furniture was not luxurious, and the contrasts in color between the paper on

the walls, the covering of the short sofa, and the faded red of the carpet were not harmonious.

Just now, however, the eye caught only the bright fire, the lights shining on paper and books, and perhaps the gilt frames of some very good sketches with which Munroe had adorned the walls. It was evident at a glance, though, that he was taking his play quite in earnest, and had made no attempt to transfer the luxury of the other side into the Bohemian's reservation.

To have said in the presence of old Seymour that the apartment was not the finest in the world, would have been a cruelty; for as he straightened his aged back, after carefully placing a small stick of wood on the fire, and adjusting the ashes so as best to economize the fuel, he gave a glance around the room of evident pride and satisfaction.

"Does Monsieur desire anything more?" he asked.

"Yes, bring some glasses, please," answered Munroe; and unlocking a small cupboard he

took out a bottle of Vermouth, and turning to Mr. Harding said, "I'm going to beg you to try a taste of this. Teresa's dinners are plentiful, but if it should happen to be sauer-kraut night you may need an appetizer. Don't be afraid of it, Fred."

"I 'm not, thanks," answered Fred, laconically, as he placed his empty glass on the table.

"It 's very good," said Mr. Harding. "I see you allow yourself some of the luxuries."

"Yes, I have quite an array of bottles locked up there. Old Seymour is perfectly honest, but he has a failing for liquor. I discovered it one day when I found my sherry visibly lowered, and the old man proportionately elevated. He 's quite cheerful enough without artificial aid. And now shall we start?"

A very short walk took them to Teresa's door. It was not quite the hour for dinner, and some of the places were unoccupied. Teresa bustled across the room and welcomed Munroe and his friends with effusion, talking volubly while she showed them where to sit.

The room filled rapidly, and promptly at

the proper hour dinner began. Everybody seemed in good appetite and good spirits. Conversation burst forth in a volcanic and polyglot manner astounding to a stranger. "The Autocrat" would have received but scant courtesy here. Every man seemed to have a decided opinion about something that needed instant and emphatic expression; and yet, as the intelligent and active Alphonse changed the plates for each succeeding course, he could have told you that those he removed were swept clean. Excited conversation did not apparently interfere with hearty eating.

Teresa moved up and down the room, occasionally joining in the conversation, and always watching the plates of her customers. She believed that every one should eat all they took, and if any one failed to do this, generally asked them why.

"You do not find it good, Monsieur?" she said in a reproachful tone to Fred, as the waiter took away his nearly untouched plate of beef stew; and Fred, blushing to be thus personally addressed, answered in his broken French, —

"Yes, Madame, very good; but I was n't thinking about it."

This indeed was true enough, for both he and Mr. Harding were vastly interested. Things went with a snap at this dinner that was quite upsetting. A dignified English butler, with his slow movements and suave manner, would simply have been driven mad by the sharp contradictory commands to which Alphonse was quite accustomed; and even the slippered and alert waiters of their hotel would probably have made but poor work here. Miss Leslie, could she have had her wish and seen it, would certainly have pronounced it all "most unpleasant." Her father also was too accustomed to another way of living to like it, but the novelty of the scene interested him.

The place was unique. For thirty years Teresa had occupied the same room. Originally a pretty Alsacian girl, she and her sister had sold pastry and cakes here; then Alsacian beer; and as their custom grew, had put in the six tables which still served their purpose, and turned the place into a regular brasserie.

The sister had died long ago; but Teresa kept on, till now she was, not a shadow, but a multiple of her former self, fast getting short-breathed and short-tempered. Rumor said that years ago she had been desperately in love with a handsome young foreigner, who used to frequent the place with two companions, one of them a Russian prince; but Teresa was very silent about her past, and the story was only known to some of the older men.

Her room was her pride and delight. From wainscot to ceiling, the walls were covered with oil paintings, some of them the work of artists who afterward made great reputations, and none of them bad. Many an unpaid score was represented here, and some gratitude too, for several had sent their good work as a reward for past forbearance. The pictures looked more ancient than they were. Time, tobacco-smoke, and an occasionally badly-disposed stove had done their work, and like Teresa they were assuming a somewhat wrinkled and yellow appearance.

Around the entire room, so high up as to be

nearly out of reach, ran a shelf on brackets, and from this, as the dinner drew to a close, the various habitués of the place took down their clay pipes and vile French tobacco, and made ready for an evening of talk, dominos, and beer. Alphonse removed the table-cloths, took out the pieces of tin which filled the spaces between the tables on either side, and those who remained, settled down as if the place belonged to them.

Munroe and his two friends were seated on a bench which ran the length of the room with its back to the wall. The places next them were left vacant, and Munroe, rising, called across the room, —

"Tolofski, won't you take your coffee and come over here?"

The young man addressed nodded assent, and began to extricate himself from behind one of the opposite tables. As Munroe sat down, he explained briefly that it was the young Russian artist of whom he had spoken the night before, — "a most interesting fellow, an enthusiast, and bound to succeed."

Fred looked at the slight, not very robust figure coming toward them, and was disappointed. His idea of a Russian had been drawn from some tremendous fellows he had seen at the play, who came into the ladies' drawing-room in top-boots and big fur-coats, carrying short heavy whips, which they cracked violently when the text called for passion.

"This chap looks more like a tutor," thought Fred.

Whatever the typical tutor called to Fred's mind looked like, he might have been glad to have so fine a face as Mr. Serge Tolofski's. Smooth and dark, perhaps a little sad in repose, it lighted up wonderfully when he spoke; the mouth was mobile and full of expression, the nose straight and fine; the eyes were brown and set well apart, and the broad low forehead was covered with curling black hair. In his face one saw intellect and sensibility strongly marked, and the promise of a controlling will was shown by the firm lines of his chin.

Mr. Harding liked both his appearance and talk. Perhaps the latter was a little too positive

in tone, but it had the merit of differing from that of the average young man.

Since Leslie had "come out," Mr. Harding had been compelled to listen to selections of inanity in almost every language, and was a little tired of it. He and Tolofski were soon involved in an argument about French art. Mr. Harding said it was low in tone.

"Why do you think so?" asked Tolofski.

"I judge from what I see of it. Look at the Salon Exhibition, — I suppose it to be representative, — and what do we find? A few good things, to be sure, but how many bad ones! Good drawing, I grant you, but as art work, what are they?"

"There," answered Tolofski, "I think you fall into just the error which misleads many intelligent persons. In art the majority does n't rule. The majority is bad; it has been and always will be so. The question is, are those few good pictures of which you speak leading us toward a higher standard; or, in other words, is representative French art an advance toward the ideal interpretation of Nature in its various phases?

I claim it is. No one loves the classic more than I do. Who can now paint with Raphael or Tintoretto? But they painted for their own age and time, and with their lights. Surely, progress is possible. Toward this the French school is working. What ancient has given us quite the insight into landscape that Troyon has? One hears the lowing of the cattle, feels the gentle breeze that bends the grasses, almost sees the grasses grow. We look, and feel nearer to the great heart of Nature. That is art!"

"Yes, but even if you call Troyon a modern, such painters are rare."

"So are your Raphaels, and all the rest; you may count them on your two hands. You do an injustice to this country when you say 'French art' with a contemptuous accent. You go to the salon; the glaring absurdities catch your eye. You visit the shops, and see copies of a picture of two half-naked women fencing, or some nude creature under a tree, called 'After the Bath,' or some gorgeously dressed blonde standing by a window gazing at vacancy, called 'Reverie,' and you say 'French art!'"

"Well," laughed Mr. Harding, pleased in spite of himself by the young fellow's vehemence, — "well, I can't help repeating that there's not much else to see."

"Yes, there is. Go to the Luxembourg and study the selections there, as you study Fra Angelico or Bellini. Go to the salon, and look for what is good instead of what is bad. The good is there, take my word for it. You will find the honest work of men, who, using the best examples of the past as models, are striving to work out an advancement in the spirit of our own time and age. I do wish people would use their own judgment, but they are usually afraid to like a modern picture outside of the catch-penny sort. There are no guide-books with stars and double stars to show them where to stop and say, 'How lovely!' So they pass by in silence." He made an impatient movement with his hand, and leaned back in his seat with a fine expression of scorn on his face.

Munroe, who had been engaged in teaching Fred the game of French dominos, had at the same time been listening to the conversation,

and was pleased to see how much Tolofski had interested Mr. Harding. He had a certain pride in showing off a good specimen of one of the "enthusiasts" he had told them of. He thought best, however, to check the artist's flow of language, knowing that once roused, the young man never knew how or when to stop. So he said, mildly, "I quite agree with you, Tolofski, about the possibilities of modern art, but it ought n't to keep a man from finishing his coffee and having some beer."

Tolofski laughed pleasantly, and said, "You are quite right, my friend," and then addressing Mr. Harding again, "I hope you don't misunderstand my heat. I am very young in art myself, and ignorant; but I sincerely believe that the world has much to thank the French people for in these matters, and I cannot bear to see them misjudged."

Mr. Harding was perhaps inclined to agree with Tolofski in his estimate of his own ignorance, but he was none the less pleased with the young man's enthusiasm and faith in the future.

The room was now quite full. A workman

in his blouse had entered and taken a chair near the door; next to him was an officer and two rather dandified-looking Frenchmen. A quartette of young artists coming from the Café des École had dropped in for one more bottle of beer; the place was blue with smoke, and Alphonse busy replenishing the glasses. Teresa had retired to the small room which opened back of the café, and sat at her desk calmly casting up accounts and making change.

The door opened, letting in a blast of damp chilly air, which whirled the clouds of smoke to the upper part of the room, where they moved lazily in changing forms about the black frames of the higher pictures.

Alphonse, the ready, dashed forward to receive the new arrivals, but drew back with a disgusted air when he saw they were only two old street-musicians. One of them placed a chair near the door and sat down to tune his violin, while the other stood thirstily eying the numerous glasses on the tables.

Munroe, who had often heard the old men perform, ordered some beer for them. They

acknowledged it with a grave bow, and placing the glasses on the round marble-topped stove in the middle of the room, stood together and contributed their part to the entertainment. One played the violin more than fairly, while the other, in a worn but sweet voice, sang a French ballad, in which the music was better than the sentiment. Conversation went on just as before. This was but another variety of noise, and attracted little attention.

The combination was a little too much for Mr. Harding, who felt that his curiosity was fairly satisfied, and he rose to go. As he did so he said to Tolofski: "I have been much interested in our talk, and hope we may continue it sometime; and by the way I have a very fair collection of illuminated manuscripts. I suppose these things, as being the beginning of the colorist's skill, will interest you. I shall be glad to show them if you will come and see us. Mr. Munroe will show you the way, I'm sure."

"I shall be very glad to do so," said Munroe, heartily. "How does Thursday afternoon suit

you both? Mr. Tolofski might join our little theatre party, and go from your rooms to dine."

"A very good plan," said Mr. Harding; "and the ladies will, I 'm sure, be glad of an addition to our number. After twenty years of faithful service, they don't hesitate to say that I 'm dull."

Tolofski hesitated a moment, being rather appalled at the idea of meeting ladies, but having no excuse ready, said in an embarrassed way: "Yes, I'll come, most happy. I want to see the manuscripts, and I shall enjoy the theatre; but I 'm not much used to talking to ladies, you know."

"Very well," said Munroe, "then it 's settled; and we won't tell Mrs. Harding and her daughter the form in which you accepted."

They all laughed, and shaking hands with Tolofski, lifted their hats to the company at large, and Teresa in particular, and passed out into the drizzle of a mild Parisian fog.

CHAPTER IV.

SERGE TOLOFSKI was really a gifted young man. If not a genius, he had at any rate in a high degree what is known as the "artistic temperament." Matter-of-fact people, and artists who had settled down into mediocrity, content if their pictures sold for enough to keep the pot boiling, said he was too high-strung. Perhaps for his own happiness he was. Such natures as his, with unerring instinct for all that is true and beautiful, seem to suffer as much as they enjoy.

What Tolofski felt in painting he felt in sculpture, and indeed in every form of art-work. Without being a musician, he yet knew good music and loved it. Never having written, he appreciated the art in what he read. A grand idea, perfectly expressed, sent a quivering sense of enjoyment all over him. He scarcely knew

what calm approval meant, or purely critical dislike. In all things he loved that which is good, and hated that which is evil.

Being but twenty-five years old, Tolofski had yet to learn the limitations of his own powers. In his secret heart he believed himself capable of the highest things, but his constant failure to attain them frequently plunged him into the depths of despair. Seeing the goal, knowing the way, and appreciating the value of labor, he yet chafed at his slow progress, and many a time had painted out with a few strokes the labor of days, because it fell short of his ideal. Yet his was good work, for it was always, as the French critic has put it, "Nature seen through the prism of an emotion."

Tolofski had never lived among men of the world, or known much of the training which society gives. He admired impassibility, but could not understand it. As a boy he was under the care of an indulgent mother, and ran wild in the country. Not caring for rough sports, he spent his time wandering in the

fields and woods, and learned both to know and love Nature in all her moods.

Munroe, city bred, calm, and almost unimpressionable, save where principle or the action of men were involved, could scarcely understand the artist's feelings, but yet loved to hear him rave about the scenes of his childish days. Munroe's early impressions of Nature were drawn largely from Newport, where he went as a boy every summer, and drove about in a village cart with a groom, or played on his father's place. Later, he knew the Berkshire Hills and Mt. Desert; but somehow his memory of the sunsets and landscapes of these beautiful places was mixed with that of certain daintily-dressed girls, who had a trick of disposing themselves gracefully where the eye paused on its way to look at the tender light of the western sky, and once pausing was caught by perhaps the shimmer of golden hair, or by a perfect figure in silhouette against the blue beyond.

With Munroe a day in the woods meant a "picnic," with insufficient food and probably flies in the butter; to Tolofski it meant a day

of lonely wandering and keen enjoyment. To one the forest seemed a place in which to be more or less uncomfortable; to the other, a temple where man should stand reverent, with head uncovered. From a seat on some moss-covered fern-embowered rock, in the perfect stillness of the early dawn, to hear Nature waking from her sleep, — the tremulous silvery rustle of the aspens and birches; the faint sound of moving leaves, where some squirrel looked cautiously from a tree-top; the startling thud of a dropping nut; the first twitter of the birds as the rays of the rising sun struck the highest trees, — to see the light sifting through the branches, making white patches on the earth beneath, or hanging like a mirror on the round trunk of some tall tree; to drink in the dewy beauty of the landscape as it gradually unfolded itself in the growing light, revealing the great hills in their solemn quiet, with the shadows moving down their sides and the placid lake nestling in their protecting arms; and finally to feel in every nerve the cheerful awakening of a new day, ushered in by a burst of music

from a thousand full-throated songsters, — all this was to the painter an ecstasy, an inspired joy, the memory of which had carried him safely over many a dark hour in the dreary days and nights of his first winter in Paris.

One day when Tolofski was talking in his own absorbed way, Munroe had said to him placidly, "If I were you I would take things more calmly. You can't reform the world; let 'em take care of themselves, these chaps who paint badly, — they don't hurt you."

"No, but they hurt art," he replied, "and I can't help feeling. A discord makes me shudder, whether in music or anything else."

"Then I hope for your sake that you'll never have anything really worth shuddering about. It's an awful mistake, my dear fellow, to go on such high pressure; you make errors, and when the ground is knocked from under your feet you can't gather yourself."

Kindly meant words, but utterly useless. Calculating philosophy cannot check the tears or stop the laughter of such a nature; and hard it is that to men like this one, comes so

often a heavy punishment for the very thing that gives the charm and power to their lives.

When Munroe and Tolofski arrived at the Hardings' rooms on the evening appointed, the ladies had not yet appeared in the salon. Mr. Harding at once took them in charge, and he and Tolofski were soon absorbed in the examination of various manuscripts, dating from the thirteenth to the seventeenth centuries.

Mr. Harding's mind was not a brilliant one, nor rapid in its operations; but what he knew he knew well. The collection of these manuscripts was one of his hobbies; he spent a great deal of time and much money on them. He justified this extravagance by a theory that as the supply was limited, they were necessarily growing scarce and therefore more valuable; but when he announced a new purchase to Mrs. Harding, it was always in a timid and hesitating manner. She did not share his belief in the value of the collection as a speculation. She, however, used this amiable weakness as a cover for her own fondness for bric-a-brac; and

it thus happened that they sometimes charged each other with extravagance. Such disputes were generally settled by mutual concessions, and brought on short periods of rigid economy. Then they watched each other, and when one had a relapse the other did also.

Meantime Mrs. Harding and Leslie were with Nora's aid dressing for dinner. The maid Nora had been with them ever since Leslie's birth. She was active, intelligent, faithful, honest, and spoiled. The responsibilities of the family seemed to be on her shoulders. She did the packing, paid the bills, mended the clothes, scolded the servants, and was allowed all kinds of liberties. She talked English, French, and Italian with an Irish brogue, and family councils were not complete without her. Being moreover of a social disposition, and a favorite with the other maids, she collected from time to time a considerable amount of news and information, which Mrs. Harding secretly enjoyed. Nora knew this, but always expected a lecture on the evils of gossiping when she volunteered anything of the sort. This was not pure hypocrisy

on Mrs. Harding's part, but a sop to her conscience for listening.

It is said that women pass through three stages in regard to their love for gossip. The first, when it "goes into one ear and out of the other;" the second, when they enjoy it but will not confess that they do; and the third, when they gloat over it. Mrs. Harding was in the second stage.

Nora had just finished a tale about a certain prima donna who had an apartment below, and who had been heard singing a very curious song indeed, — one mingled with the screech of a parrot and a torrent of Italian expletives.

"Indeed, ma'am, they do say he beats her horrible," said Nora.

Mrs. Harding was standing at her bureau extracting some jewels from a case. It was rather interesting to know that a singer who commanded great prices and much applause was sometimes beaten; it confirmed her general opinion of that kind of people. But she paid no attention to Nora's tale. She said: "Where is the box with my large pearl?"

Then Nora knew that she had escaped the lecture, because Mrs. Harding had preferred the plan of pretending not to listen.

Leslie was seated in a large chair near a table, lazily polishing her nails. The position and occupation were favorable to thought, and she was thinking. She had not heard a word of Nora's story. Indeed, she seldom took interest enough to listen to her. From the next room came the sound of voices, and she knew that her father was there with Mr. Munroe and the Russian painter. Mr. Harding had told her of his new acquaintance, — what he was like, and how he talked. A young man who interested her father, interested her. In a vague way she was thinking of the artist, and wondering if he were really different from all the rest. Finally, she laid down her polisher and picked up a large bunch of lilies-of-the-valley which Munroe had sent.

"I suppose *he* neither could nor would do this sort of thing," she thought.

Her mother noticed the action, and said, —

"It was very kind of Mr. Munroe, was n't

it, Leslie? And lilies are so expensive in winter."

"Yes," answered Leslie, hastily putting the flowers down and rising; "very thoughtful." But she had received too many winter lilies to have them affect her much. They were a natural part of her dress and surroundings, and were gradually losing their refining power and falling into line as part of the furniture of luxury.

"I don't like Mr. Munroe's inviting that young man, a perfect stranger, to dine with us," continued Mrs. Harding. "It was n't the thing to do. No one knows anything about him."

"But, Mamma, it came about naturally. Papa said so, and he liked him."

"Your father, Leslie, likes all sorts of people. However, we must make the best of it, and it need go no further. Are you ready?"

"Not quite," said Leslie, "I 'll follow you in a moment;" and she pulled a small bunch of lilies from the large one on the table, and proceeded to fasten them at her waist.

The rustle of Mrs. Harding's dress caused the gentlemen to look up from their examination of the manuscripts. Munroe gave a sigh of relief, for he was rapidly getting bored, and one big crooked gilt letter looked to him pretty much like all the rest.

Mrs. Harding came forward and welcomed him cordially, giving Tolofski a courteous smile and bow as he was introduced; then turning to her husband, she said: "George, don't you see that you are ruining the eyesight of these young men and your own, in this light? And besides, I'm sure Mr. Tolofski is quite tired out with the musty things."

"Indeed, Madame, it has been a very great pleasure. I have learned much from your husband; and it is so rare to find men who know thoroughly what they are talking about," Tolofski responded quickly.

Leslie, who had entered quietly, heard the last remark, and had time to notice the young man's fine earnest face as he spoke.

"He is different," thought she; then crossing the room toward them with her upright carriage

and smooth easy step, she first thanked Munroe pleasantly for the flowers, and then at her father's introduction gave her hand with a cordial smile to Tolofski; and the artist, feeling the firm honest grasp, and looking with wide-open eyes and a faint flush of embarrassment on his face at the perfect figure before him, felt the first thrill of a feeling that never knew an end.

Munroe noted his embarrassment, and remembered their conversation. He thought, "Poor fellow! he is more unused to girls than I imagined."

Poor fellow, indeed! Little did Leslie think as she stood there well-poised, cool, and dignified, with a pretty speech about art on her lips, that with him her form would now take art's place; that between the painter and his canvas her face, with its pleasant smile and its dimples, would henceforth always intervene. Poor fellow, indeed!

CHAPTER V.

THE dinner at Voisin's was a comfortable and satisfactory affair. There was indeed too much to eat and to drink; but as no one, unless possibly Fred, either ate or drank too much, the over-supply simply stood as a monument to Munroe's liberality, — hurting nobody, and perhaps serving to raise him in Mrs. Harding's estimation. She admired a cheerful giver, but loved an extravagant one. It is to be feared that she sometimes graded her own hospitality to the supposed power of its recipient to repay in kind; but this after all is a just rule, and one based on the soundest principles of political economy. In questions of giving and receiving, she was apt to ask herself, "Will it pay?" And if she sometimes drove rather a hard bargain and got a little more than she gave, it was no more

than most of us are trying to do nearly every day of our lives.

Munroe had the mistaken notion that the way to please Miss Leslie was to please her mother. He saw a difference between them, but as yet did not realize how great it was. Perhaps he was not to blame for not seeing that the daughter cared very little for attentions of this sort; that she really knew nothing about the value of money, and considered rich gifts from the rich man's abundance pretty cheap gifts after all. How could he realize that every true girl at some part of her life values a man for what he does and is, not for what he gives; that strong work coming from the heart and touching the heart, that a noble picture lifting the mind to things of beauty, or even a good honest effort to do the best he had in him, would touch Leslie more than all the attentions he could shower upon her, costing him — a little money earned by some one else?

Alas! society makes it bad form to be in earnest, and sooner or later moulds its Leslies

after its own fashion, so that the noble impulses and purposes, unused and useless, drop away, leaving — well, leaving its Mrs. Hardings.

And Leslie from her standpoint was not perhaps to blame, either, for not knowing that the expression of such sentiments and feelings would be better than politely to accept what she did not care for; that one earnest word from a true girl to many a man who seems hopelessly good-for-nothing may rouse an ambition that will start into life some work the extent and power of which cannot be measured.

Tolofski sat between Mr. Harding and Leslie. After the first few moments of shyness, he felt himself almost unnaturally happy. He talked constantly, and talked well, — so well that the rest of the table often paused to listen.

Mrs. Harding attributed his volubility to wine. In a large experience of dining out, she had noticed that even silent and stupid youths sometimes become talkative after the third course. But Leslie saw that Tolofski drank scarcely anything. The truth was, the unusual surroundings and company affected him. He remembered

with a feeling of disgust the smell of bad tobacco, the clatter of the knives and plates, and the jargon of tongues at Teresa's, and was soothed but yet exhilarated by the scent of the flowers, the perfect service, and the quiet tones of the people about him. There was a sense of soft rest, which somehow reminded him of the first night he spent in a good bed, after one time as a boy camping out for a week. And then close to him was Leslie in her rich dinner-dress, one slender hand resting on the arm of her chair, sitting erect and dignified, but turning toward him every now and then a look full of unaffected interest in what he was saying, which flattered and excited him. There are plates so sensitive that an instant's exposure stamps a lasting picture on their surface. The artist was under the direct rays of the light for a long time that night.

Munroe was quite in his element, talking in his cool semi-humorous way to Mrs. Harding, and leading her in a wicked manner into the expression of firm convictions on subjects of which she knew very little.

Society likes to leave accurate knowledge to specialists, whom it worships if they be the fashion, and patronizes if they be not. Its brightest women manage in some way to pick up enough drift-wood to keep their fires burning, and the rest cry, "How brilliant!"

Leslie found herself studying Tolofski with a great deal of interest. She saw at once that he was "different," as she had put it. She had found her new type. Would she like it? So far she did. It was refreshing to meet a man who had opinions, and was not afraid of them; who seemed unconventional and yet a gentleman; and she surprised herself by drifting into serious talk, and finally into personal talk too.

"How did you happen to be an artist?" she asked.

"I suppose it's my natural mode of expression," he answered. "If I feel deeply, I try to paint my feelings."

"But you can't feel very deeply about a landscape, for instance, can you?"

"Why not? If you love Nature, she lets you

see her in all her moods; and whether her face wears a frown or a smile, it is reflected in your heart. We can't reproduce her,—our attempts are but faint shadows of the real effects; but now and then one sees even a painting which makes one 'feel.' Is n't it so?"

"Yes," replied Leslie, doubtfully, "I suppose it is. But such pictures are rare."

"I know they are; and that is because most people having eyes, see not. I don't understand how any one can help feeling, if one sits down in the woods and watches the dying day. How the growing stillness calms the nerves and brings peace to the mind! Perhaps the sun is sinking behind the hills, making lights and shades marked and distinct. Above, the fleecy clouds are touched with faintest pink. Opposite, you see the dark fir-trees climbing the hill and standing out sharp and strong against the yellow sky; scattered through them here and there the light green of the timid birches, with their delicate white trunks almost lighting the growing darkness. The water at your feet is still and shining, half of it in black shadow, and

the rest reflecting with minute perfection every over-hanging tree and shrub. The silence is broken only by the drowsy hum of insects, or the last note of some wood-thrush as he settles to his rest. Ah!" and his expression changed to one of sadness, "the feeling comes easily enough,—the trouble is to paint it."

"Good gracious!" said Mrs. Harding in a low voice to Munroe, "does your friend always go on like that?"

"No," answered he, "but he's easily worked up to it. I like to hear him; and often, I'm ashamed to say, draw him out by disagreeing with some of his high-flown theories."

"Is he really a good artist?"

"Indeed, yes; the younger men already discuss 'Tolofski's method,' or 'Tolofski's technique;' and the picture he has under way for the Salon will, if I'm not mistaken, attract attention, and perhaps make a lion of him."

"Is he of good family?"

"I really don't know; we inquire very little about antecedents over there; the best man is the one who does the best work. I fancy,

however, from some things he has said, that his parents are both dead, and though he seems comfortably off, I don't think he's rich."

"I wonder if it would do to ask him to go with us to the Louvre. I should like to spend an hour there with an artist. A guide-book is such a bother; and yet we must know something about the pictures. Do you think he'd go?"

Munroe glanced across the table and saw Tolofski, with his eyes fastened on Leslie's face in rapt attention, and his lips parted in a pleased smile.

"Yes," he said, "yes, I think he'd be glad to go."

And Leslie was saying, "Really, Mr. Tolofski, I think you might be a poet as well as a painter. Did you ever try to write?"

"Yes," he answered blushing, "three or four verses."

"Can't you repeat them?"

"I'll try," he replied, blushing still more. "I never repeated them to any one, but somehow you're different."

"So I'm different too," thought Leslie.

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"These are the lines," he continued in a hesitating way. "The idea is — but perhaps you'll see the idea."

A man on whom the gods had brought misfortune
Sat by a fountain, thinking of his woe;
His eye was blinded to the things about him,
His ear heard not the water's gentle flow.

Then came a fairy dancing on a sunbeam,
Who watched him, half in pity, half in fear.
"Oh, give me back," he cried, "the joy of living!"
She murmured lightly, "Look! behold it here!"

And so his eyes were opened to the beauties
The gods had painted on the leaves and trees;
He saw the wood-sprites dancing round the fountain,
And heard the magic music in the breeze.

And then the fairy bade him show to others
The lovely things contained within the wood,
That men whose lives are desolate and empty
Might learn, that after all the gods are good.

"Why, that's lovely, Mr. Tolofski! it really is," exclaimed Leslie.

"I'm afraid it's very boyish," he said, modestly; "I wrote it a long time ago. But perhaps I may do better sometime."

"I'm sure nothing could be prettier than the idea that insight into Nature is a consolation for sorrow; could it, Papa?"

"I dare say," replied Mr. Harding, speaking very irrelevantly. He felt the heat of the room, and was not only inattentive, but getting rapidly sleepy.

"I really think it's time we started," said Mrs. Harding; "I for one don't wish to miss a word. Fred, what are you going to do?"

"I'm going to the Eden; but I'm in no hurry," answered Fred, with an air of manly indifference.

"I don't think you should be allowed to go to such places," said Mrs Harding, rising, "you're much too young."

"Oh, come off, Aunt Harriet!" responded Fred, relapsing into his boyish slang.

"You're much too old to talk in that fashion, at any rate," said Leslie, in a rebuking tone.

"Poor Fred!" laughed Munroe, "he's quite in the position of the boy who said he was too old to cry and too young to swear."

"Well, I'm too young to appreciate Molière at any rate," said Fred. "Uncle George, you'd better come along with me."

Mr. Harding looked very much as if he would

have liked it, but he sacrificed his inclinations, and they started in a good humor for the theatre.

They arrived in good time. The foyer was full of people, greeting each other, laughing, talking, and gesticulating as only the French can. Here and there one heard the "My dear, how *do* you do?" with which English-speaking ladies sometimes greet one another; but the volume of sound was in the form of what insular prejudice calls "chatter." On them all Houdon's wonderful statue of Voltaire looked down from its marble seat, with its pinched face and cynical smile, as if enjoying the sight of so much frivolity. Within, the rapidly filling tiers of boxes were already brilliant with the gay dresses and jewels of the best-dressed ladies in the world. Below in the pit the young French dandies, standing with their backs to the stage, and with their hats on the backs of their heads, slowly raked the whole house with their glasses.

Leslie and her mother received their full share of attention as they entered; and as

Leslie seated herself and raised her long-handled lorgnette to her eyes, calmly surveying the scene before her, a lady in the next box said to her friend, "What a fine pose that girl has! I wonder who she is!"

Everybody knows Molière's inimitable comedies, not too delicate in their tone, but full of humorous situations, wit, and knowledge of the motives which influence action. The French are inclined to put him on a plane with Shakspeare, and certainly would if they could; but whatever his proper rank as a dramatist may be, certainly his reputation did not suffer by the representation given that night by the people of the Théâtre Français. It was the most finished piece of acting that Leslie had ever seen, and she was delighted.

Tolofski, with his keen appreciation of all good work, was really carried away, and as the curtain fell at the end of the first play, gave a long sigh of contentment as he settled back in his chair.

"Very amusing, is n't it?" said Mrs. Harding, turning to him.

"Ah, Madame," he replied, "it's more than that, — it is art."

During the long wait, Mrs. Harding begged Munroe to take her out for a walk in the foyer. Mr. Harding, forgetting his duty as chaperon, shortly followed them, and Tolofski found himself alone with Leslie in the semi-obscurity of their large box.

Their talk, which had been of acting and plays now drifted to other forms of art, and without knowing exactly how, Tolofski found himself telling Leslie of his ambitions, labors, and disappointments, and finally of his early life, and passionate love for his dead mother and affection for his sister, who was waiting, he said, till he painted his first great picture, before coming to live with him. Leslie listened a little uneasily at first, for his earnest face and talk, and his unreserved confidence in a person he had only just met, puzzled her, and she was half inclined not to like it. But his manner was simple, — almost boyish, — and she forgot the strangeness of it all in her growing interest.

Men of Tolofski's nature often make rapid

progress in a young woman's favor. They plunge at once *in medias res* in a perfectly unreasonable manner, without calculation or forethought, and succeed, if they do nothing else, in making a distinct impression. They are liable to make mistakes, and have to suffer the refined and cruel punishment which every young woman has the power within her to inflict, and will inflict, if she so much as suspect undue presumption.

But in this case Leslie was really interested. Her recent longings for the acquaintance and talk of an earnest man predisposed her to like Tolofski; and if she was rather overpowered by the suddenness and directness of his methods, he was in too much of a glamor to notice it. He only knew that for the first time since he had left his mother and sister he had found a refined, beautiful woman, who had received him kindly, and seemed to sympathize with his longings and efforts to reach the high standard he had set before himself. Under such conditions, with his peculiar temperament, and coming suddenly from the loneliness and roughness

of a student's life into the atmosphere of a refined home, it was not strange that he lost his head.

And how could Leslie repulse a man who said gravely and simply, —

"You remind me in some way of my sister; she is tall and dark and straight, as you are. Poor girl! she is all alone in the world now. It is that I suppose which makes her face so sad. She can't smile as you do, but she also is lovely and sweet."

Thus these two chatted on, making unconventional progress in intimacy; and if Leslie afterward, in the privacy of her own room, had to confess to herself that she had been too sympathetic with this unknown painter, and had even talked to him a little of her own feelings and views of life in a way that was quite unwarranted and of which she knew her mother would have disapproved, may we not forgive her, remembering that she was as yet very young, and that the veneer which we all know is so necessary was as yet but thinly laid on?

The house now began to fill again, and

very soon the rest of the party returned to the box.

Mrs. Harding was in the best of spirits. She had met several acquaintances, and held quite a reception in the foyer. She even forgot to ask Leslie where she had been, and was so amiable to Tolofski that he fell quite in love with her too. They were all fascinated with "Précieuses Ridicules," which was the last play; and before they realized it was over, the curtain came down, and the audience began to work its way toward the exits.

Munroe, who had been a little put out at having the sole charge of Mrs. Harding when he had expected a certain amount of her daughter's society, now hastened to help Leslie with her cloak, and engaging her in conversation, kept by her side till they had made their way in slow progress to the doors.

Tolofski, who in an indefinite way had hoped for some farewell word, was disappointed and walked silently by Mrs. Harding's side.

After they reached the carriage she said, "We are going to the Louvre Saturday after-

noon, Mr. Tolofski, and if you have the time I wish you might join us. I should so like to ask you about some of the pictures."

His spirits rose a little as he answered, "I should be very glad to do so. At what hour shall I call?"

"We shall start about two, and I shall hope to see you then. Good-night."

The carriage rolled off, leaving him standing on the damp pavement with his hat in his hand; and it was not until he was jostled by a large woman nearly into the gutter, that he put it on, and started on his lonely way across the river. It was darker and damper than usual. The sharp click of the carriage-door seemed to have cut off all light and warmth, and he wandered slowly on under the arches, through the square by the Louvre, and on to the bridge, where the gaslights glimmered in dull reflection on the muddy water. As he stood a moment and watched a boat glide silently under and then swiftly disappear in the darkness below, a miserable beggar with whining voice asked for a sou. He gave him some coppers and hastened

on. He too was getting cold and miserable. The reaction had begun, and life had not now that roseate hue with which the past day had colored it.

Tolofski found his room was chill and uncomfortable. The light of one candle shed a cheerless flickering gleam on the bare walls and scanty furniture. He sat with his head leaning on his hand, thinking over the events of the day, and contrasting the past hours with the present and the future, till this little oasis of happiness became swallowed up in the desert, and the world seemed a very big place and he a very small atom in it; and finally, when sleep overpowered him in his narrow iron bed, he dreamed that he was making frantic and unavailing efforts to climb a lofty mountain, on the top of which sat Leslie, calm, smiling, and upright, holding the red ribbon of the legion-of-honor in her hand.

As Leslie bade good-night to her mother after Mr. Munroe had gone, she said gravely, "Mamma, why did you ask Mr. Tolofski to go with us to the Louvre? We know nothing about him."

"Mr. Munroe says he is a remarkable young man," Mrs. Harding replied, "and bound to be quite a lion."

"Oh!" said Leslie; and as she sat in her easy-chair thinking, gradually a pleased smile came over her face, and when she finally fell asleep it was with an agreeable sense that something pleasant had happened to her.

CHAPTER VI.

THE expedition to the Louvre was followed by several others of a similar nature.

Tolofski was intelligent in his criticisms, and Mrs. Harding assimilated as much of them as she could for future use. She had a good memory, her use of art terms was discreet, and among her friends she passed for an authority.

"Mr. Tolofski is very clever, and remarkably good-natured about going with us," she said to her daughter.

"Yes, Mamma," answered Leslie, demurely, "it's very kind of him, I'm sure."

Through Mr. Harding, who had taken a liking to him, Tolofski was often at their rooms. There had been a good many opportunities for private talk. Leslie never made them, but she did not avoid them, and the intimacy of these two grew

apace. The conditions on either side were favorable, and the growth was rapid.

Leslie got into the habit of talking unreservedly of her opinions and thoughts, and enjoyed being thoroughly earnest and honest. Tolofski met her more than half way, and, unaccustomed to conceal his feelings, opened wide the flood-gates of his heart. Hopes, fears, ambitions, memories, all that he thought, were poured forth, — all but love. Prudence as yet kept that back; but being so locked up it accumulated power. He knew it would break bounds sometime. Prudence with him was not a staying quality.

Meantime the artist's work suffered. His moods changed too rapidly. Sunshine and shadow chased each other, making his touch uncertain and spoiling the smooth, culminating strength of his method. What he painted to-day from the top of the Mountain of Hope, he changed to-morrow at the edge of the Slough of Despond. Sometimes he thought bitterly that his hand had lost its cunning, not realizing that the fault was with his eye, which being no

longer single had ceased to occupy itself solely with "the beauties the gods had painted on the leaves and trees." He had whole days when light and shade, drawing and perspective were nothing to him, and every foreground was occupied by a single graceful figure, which shut off all the landscape. He did not analyze his feelings, nor try to fight them. Love was to him a holy thing. He had worshipped his mother, and now another person had come into his life who seemed worthy of the same devotion, and he fell down before her.

Leslie did not realize the depth and strength of the feeling she had aroused, but she could not help seeing admiration in Tolofski's eyes and experiencing a thrill sometimes at his tones. She felt that she was to a certain extent deceiving her father and mother, and this troubled her greatly, but she never saw her way clear to doing anything about it. "I cannot," she thought, "tell them that this man is getting interested in me, and that they must not invite him here." She believed that she was honest with herself, but the fact that it did

not occur to her to so treat Tolofski that he would not care to come, showed that she was not.

The truth was, the limitations of Leslie's life had heretofore cut off the possibility of passion. At its first appearance she had shrunk from it; then it had fascinated her with its power, and now she was beginning to feel in her own heart what it might be like. From her father she had inherited a strong nature, slow to move, but stubborn and tenacious when once roused to action. Truly, there was trouble brewing for the Harding family; and no one saw it but Fred.

Fred was a shrewd boy, who saw a good many things which he did not talk about. After he became a man, this faculty of observing everything and keeping his own counsel made him rich. Just now he said to himself, "The painter is in love with Leslie, and Leslie is more 'n half in love with the painter."

Leslie secretly loved Fred, because when he happened to be alone with Mr. Tolofski and her, he was always more interested in literature than

the conversation, and sought quiet in a distant window. She would have felt differently had she realized that behind the book was an intelligent scoffer.

Nora half suspected the state of things, but more on general principles than from anything she saw or heard. Their talk was not satisfactory, — it went over her head; it sounded earnest, but did not seem sentimental. She awaited further developments.

Mr. Harding was absent-minded and occupied, and rarely saw anything going on about him unless his attention was directly called to it. And as for Mrs. Harding, such an idea was too wild for her to think of its possibility. This was stupid of her, but perhaps many of us may remember that our ideas of the possibilities have been sometimes slightly restricted. She simply accepted Tolofski and encouraged him, on Munroe's word that he was a clever young artist, likely some day to become famous. It is always pleasant to say of a much-talked-of person, "Oh, yes, I know him well;" but it gives one quite a superior feeling to be

able to say, "I suppose I had a good deal to do with bringing him into notice."

Since the world began, patrons have thought themselves a grade higher than dependants, and critics placed themselves on a higher plane than hard-working producers. Perhaps the world at large takes them at their own estimate, but let us not deny to the artist or the writer the privilege of his own quiet opinion on this subject, nor seek too closely to know what it is lest we find it unjust also. After all, when carelessness, ignorance, and false assumption have done their worst, there is enough appreciation of good work in the world — thank God! — to lift it high out of the reach of such careless handling.

Munroe's position made an additional complication for Leslie. He was with them a great deal. As time went on he was not disappointed in his original estimate of her, and the renewed acquaintance had led him into the deliberate conclusion that it was time to change his mode of life, to give up his aimless wanderings, careless gleanings of scraps of knowledge and ex-

perience, and settle down to some serious work. "No man does this," he thought, "till he is married. Home is necessary as a place of refuge from the frivolity of society and the desecrating flippancy of club life." Not much originality in the conclusion, perhaps, and our cynic would say not much truth in it either, but nevertheless, as most of us will agree, a wise conclusion for a young man in his circumstances to come to. The more he saw of Leslie, the more she seemed to him fitted to be the light and centre of such a home.

Munroe was a man who rarely did things in a hurry. His judgment was cool and generally good. He lacked intensity, but this did not mean lack of strength. If he had so far failed to feel the rush of overpowering emotions, he had known what it was to set his teeth and walk over obstacles to his goal. He had a good mind, which he let rust; a strong will, which he rarely used; but the sensibilities were small in his make-up. He ought to have been born poor. Money had made his best powers useless, and would eventually make him a cynic.

"Love wakes men once a lifetime each." He would devote himself to falling in love. He was tired of drifting, and would turn and breast the current of life again, and Leslie should help him. The proverb says that "time and tide wait for no man;" love may sometimes, but rarely. This fact Munroe failed to take into his elaborate calculation, and having made up his mind, took it for granted that the rest was a matter of "paying marked attention" in the conventional way.

Every day Nora placed a fresh bunch of roses on the table, with a gleeful smile. In this case Nora was sure of her ground. She was familiar with the *modus operandi.* The result was beyond her sphere. Heretofore it had been disastrous to the young men. She felt sympathy for them, but the process was none the less pleasant, and often added to her income.

Fred chaffed Leslie openly about Munroe's attentions, and was snubbed for it; but he knew his ground. It delighted him to watch the two games going on at once, but he had enough

tact to know which one it was safe to talk about. He was not prepared as yet to take sides. "Let 'em settle it among themselves," said this wise youth.

Munroe often met Tolofski at the Hardings', and sometimes went there with him. He was a little surprised that Mrs. Harding encouraged the artist to come, but occupied with his own plans thought nothing more of his going, than that a man in Tolofski's lonely position would naturally enjoy the society and change. Besides, he knew it could not last long. In a few days the family would start for Nice, and he had already announced his intention of going with them.

One day Munroe had his eyes opened. He came in about four o'clock and found Tolofski there with Leslie. Fred was apparently busy writing at the table, but really trying to draw a picture of Cupid sitting on top of an easel, which he intended as a delicate attention for his cousin when the time was ripe for it. Munroe, talking in his easy way, referred to the attractions of Nice, and made plans for their future

amusement. Tolofski was, as the English say, "out of it," and rapidly getting irritated and unreasonable.

Finally, Munroe said, "Sorry you can't go with us, Tolofski."

The "us" was too much. There was an assumption of intimacy, almost of proprietorship, about the word and the tone that roused a quick unreasoning anger in Tolofski's mind. There was already good preparation and material for an explosion, and this innocent little word acted as a spark to bring it about. His face flushed, and staring at Munroe with a set look, he said hotly, —

"I see no reason why I can't go to Nice if I choose."

His tone challenged contradiction, and sought a quarrel. Without realizing at the moment exactly how, Munroe felt why this outburst had come. There was an instant's awkward silence, and then in his pleasant smooth voice, he said, —

"On the contrary, I hope sincerely that you may be able to come."

Leslie, who had her eyes fixed on Tolofski, realized the position of things with the quick instinct of woman, and for an instant flushed with embarrassment. Fortunately neither of the men was looking at her, and recovering her composure at once, she came to the rescue. Still looking at Tolofski, she said firmly, —

"You know, I'm sure, how glad we should be to see you at Nice. By 'we,' I mean my own family. Of course Mr. Munroe is even an older friend of yours," and turning, she added, "Fred, do you mind telling Mamma that Mr. Munroe is here? She is in the Gordon's salon."

"Well done for Leslie!" thought Fred, as he departed on his errand.

Mrs. Harding was a little slow about returning with Fred. She and Mrs. Gordon were congenial spirits, who mutually disapproved of each other sufficiently to make occasional interviews necessary and interesting. "An incorrigible gossip and a vulgar woman," said Mrs. Harding in the bosom of her family. "A pushing thing, and I believe a hypocrite," said Mrs. Gordon in the bosom of hers.

Now they stood for a long time going through the regulation number of parting remarks, something like a dozen with each yard's progress toward the door, where Fred, though a strong young man, leaned in an exhausted way against the wall.

Perhaps Mrs. Harding was a little more deliberate than usual. Fred had told her that Munroe was in her salon, and she took it that a brief tête-à-tête would not injure the progress of events. He had said nothing of Tolofski's presence, and she never knew of it; for on her return he had gone. The poor fellow had struggled a few moments to regain his composure, and failing, had fallen into a deep well of silence, where he reflected on his conduct, and found it so unjustifiable and foolish that he made matters worse by rising suddenly and taking an abrupt departure.

The whole scene impressed Munroe with the belief that Tolofski was jealous; and he was so astonished at this discovery that the possibility that Miss Harding might be interested in the painter did not occur to him. Not being

in love himself, but only trying in a gentlemanly way to take what he considered the necessary preliminary steps toward that desirable state, instinctive and unreasoning jealousy taught him nothing.

Leslie had bowed rather coldly to Tolofski as he took his awkward leave. She felt indignant at being nearly subjected to an unpleasant scene. Later on she forgave him, because she knew that jealousy had caused his action; and then her indignation was in an illogical way transferred to Munroe for coming at all.

After a moment's silence Munroe said, "Don't you think our friend's manner was a little peculiar?"

"Yes," answered Leslie; "but I can quite excuse a man who is really doing some hard work in the world for any slight eccentricity. It is only natural that such a one should chafe at being tied down; don't you think so?"

She said this so naturally, and with such an appealing and inclusive accent, that had Munroe suspected her, the idea would have been at once removed from his thoughts. There is

perhaps nothing so quick in nature — unless it be the passage of the electric fluid — as the doubling and turning capacity of the female mind. Be you never so nimble, you will find her safe under cover, and primed already for a counter attack, of which, if you are prudent, you will beware.

After this there was something in the atmosphere which caused conversation to flag. The fact was, Leslie wanted to be alone. She was discontented with Tolofski, with Munroe, and with herself. She thought unjustly that Munroe had an amused self-satisfied air, and she felt like saying something distinctly unpleasant. The result was that she became stiff in her manner and elaborately civil in what she said. Her mother's entrance relieved the strain, but Munroe felt the chill in the air and cut short his call.

After he had gone, Leslie said crossly, "I don't see why Mr. Munroe should go to Nice, Mamma, or at any rate why he should attach himself to us. It is very disagreeable always to have a man about."

Mrs. Harding did not mention that it was on her invitation that Munroe had made his plans. She only said, "We can't prevent his going if he likes, Leslie. Have you been quarrelling with him?"

Leslie sighed as she rose to go to her room, and replied, "You know I never quarrel with any one, Mamma. I 'm simply tired of having him about."

CHAPTER VII.

WHEN Tolofski reached his room that afternoon, he sat down with his elbows on his knees and his face between his hands, and for the space of half an hour held communion with his own heart. He had strongly upon him that unpleasant feeling which the best of us have doubtless experienced, — that he had made a fool of himself. Being exceedingly sensitive, and prone to self-depreciation, he exaggerated the matter till he worked himself into the belief that already he was come to the extreme edge of the horizon of his hopes, and looking over, saw nothing but the blackness of darkness. He had seen Leslie's disapproval in her face and manner, and her cold look and formal bow had set his exposed nerves quivering with unpleasant excitement.

Finally, this wrought-up state of mind brought him to a decision to which he might otherwise have been a long time in coming. Just as a high-strung horse, struck by the unaccustomed whip, will leap blindly at the wall reckless of consequences, so the lover suddenly determined to take his desperate chance.

"I have already exposed my feeling," he thought; "now she shall know it all, and I 'll take the consequences. Things can't be worse than they are."

Then he wrote her a letter, — such a letter as you or I may have written sometime in our lives, before we were prudent enough to weigh and measure our words, or knew how dangerous and unwise it is to put all we feel on record; one we might laugh or even sneer at now, but which nevertheless was a spontaneous and honest utterance, and therefore nobler than all the diplomatic and carefully weeded efforts of our later days. It came right from his heart, and was a curious compound of hope and despair, humble pleading and passionate love. Everything was in it but egotism and calm

common-sense, neither of which things, as we know, can live an hour with youth's first passion.

The last barrier had given way, and Leslie could now see the inmost recesses of his soul, — surely a pure, noble one, worth winning; full of high purposes, good impulses, and, best of all, of blind devotion to her.

It was a kind of love-making to which Leslie was unaccustomed; and the same directness of method and unthinking honesty of speech which had influenced her before, carried her away now. The final rush carried the barrier, and as she finished reading Tolofski's letter in the quiet of her room she hesitated a moment, and then a happy look came into her eyes as, with a blush, she raised it timidly to her lips.

Then Cupid should have flown to tell her lover what she did; but, alas! the wayward boy will never do a useful errand.

Poor Leslie! — it is time to say "poor Leslie" now, — her path was full of difficulties. She had been led rapidly on from one point to another, always meaning to turn back,

or at least to ask advice, till now she found herself driven to confess that she had given her love to a man she had known scarcely a month.

She could not understand it. She felt as if she had done some wrong thing, almost an immodest one, and her cheeks grew hot as she made her self-confession. Moreover, she felt that she had acted in an underhanded way with her family. Having once acknowledged her feeling to herself, the former excuses seemed weak enough.

She threw down the letter and paced the room, thinking, debating, doubting, fighting, until she was confused and weary with her emotions. Finally she threw herself on the bed, and burying her face in the pillow, sobbed out a petulant girlish settlement of the whole matter.

"I don't care," she cried, "I *do* love him!"

How quickly wisdom flees when love approaches! Nor wisdom only, but sometimes honesty and virtue too; so that this same heart-cry has not only told the story of, and given the reason for, much of the sweetness and true

happiness of life, foreshadowing heaven, but has also been the beginning of a world of sin and misery, worse than which we will hope the lost souls can never know.

Finally one thing appeared clear through the mists to Leslie, — she must consult her father. It is sad to record that her mind turned instinctively to him at this crisis of her life, and not to her mother. Occasionally she had tried to speak to her of the ideas which she was beginning dimly to believe to be the right ones to control action, but had found little sympathy, and the habit had become fixed to keep such thoughts to herself. Mrs. Harding had listened at first with amused wonder, and then with some impatience.

"When you get older," she had said, "you will know better than to think it possible to live in the way you say; fine sentiments and lofty romantic views of living are one thing, and life is another. You can't get on without people, and people won't have you unless you do as the rest do. I wish you were a little more like other girls!"

Thus mother and daughter had drifted apart, and the result began now to show itself. At a time when if ever a young girl needs the loving advice of a mother, Leslie felt unable to approach hers. And her father — what will he say? Well, she would go to him at once and unburden her heart. Even if he opposed her, she felt sure of a patient hearing and full, frank counsel, such as is good to hear and hard to get.

Fortunately she found him alone, at work as he often was, making notes and memoranda in connection with his reading, and two or three of his beloved old tomes were open before him. She moved a footstool to his chair, and sat down at his feet.

"Papa dear," she said, "stop reading a few moments, I want to talk to you."

Mr. Harding laid down his pencil with a half sigh, and turning, put his hand caressingly on his daughter's arm.

"What is it, child?" he said; "I hope you don't want to change our plans and stay here any longer?"

Leslie found it very hard to begin. This was a strange thing she had to tell, — strange as yet even to her. She sat with her clasped hands resting on his knee, and her eyes were cast down and her cheeks aflame, as she said finally, —

"I want to talk to you about Mr. Tolofski."

Still her father failed to see what she was coming to.

"Well?" he asked indifferently, "what about him?"

"I think," she said in a low tone, and her head drooped a little more, "I think — that is — he says he is very fond of me."

The last trace of inattention went out of Mr. Harding's face like a flash, and he looked at his daughter in a startled, anxious way that showed with how great a shock such an idea had come to him; then he withdrew his hand from her arm, and said simply, but in a sterner voice than she had ever heard from him before, —

"And you, Leslie?"

She had meant perhaps at first to discuss only one side of this question, but now she

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must tell him the whole story. She heard the disapproval in her father's tones, and when he withdrew his hand she felt as if he had pushed her away. This was not the kind of scene she had expected when the time came to tell her parents that she had given her heart away. Her girlish dreams had been of bright faces and approving words of congratulation; now there were rising tears, and a sense almost of wrong-doing. And yet — and yet — she loved him; she felt sure of that, and the belief carried her through. Her head drooped lower still, till it rested on her clasped hands, and a lonely and hopeless feeling came over her as she sobbed out her confession.

There was what seemed a very long silence. This thing had come as a complete surprise to Mr. Harding. His wife had talked enough to him about Leslie's prospects to make the idea of her marriage familiar in one way. It was his wife's province to arrange such things; but, after all, he had trusted to Leslie's common-sense to choose aright, if choose she must. Now she had apparently taken things in her own hands, and made her choice in a way that was any-

thing but sensible, and of which he instinctively disapproved.

What should he do? What *could* he do? His eyes fell on the bowed head before him, and on the shoulders heaving with an emotion which she tried in vain to control, and his great love for his daughter came over him, sweeping for the moment every other thought aside. His hand again rested lightly on her arm, and his voice was quite changed as he said, —

"Look up, Leslie, and we will talk it over."

Then with moist eyes, Leslie told of the growing interest she had felt in Tolofski from the day she had first seen him, and how they had managed very quickly to understand each other in a wonderful way; how she had admired his earnest purpose and devotion to his work; how good he was; and finally of his letter, which she could not bring herself to show even to her father, — a long story full of praise for her lover, and of humble excuses that she had done this thing without her father's knowledge.

"Indeed, I couldn't help it," she said.

Mr. Harding was very quiet during this long

tale. He had learned the essential facts when he looked at his daughter's drooping form and heard her first few whispered words. The details were not very interesting; but during their recital he had time to think, and like a wise man he let Leslie relieve her overcharged feelings, and saw her brighten up as she went on. It occurred to him that perhaps excuses were needed for the young man rather than for her, but he said nothing till she had finished. Then he asked if she had answered the letter.

"No, Papa," she replied.

"And have you spoken to your mother?" was his next question.

"I could n't, Papa dear," she answered.

"We must tell her at once," he said gravely.

"Yes," she sighed, but the "we" was a comfort to her. It seemed to promise some support of an indefinite sort. She was glad he had not said, "You must tell her."

Then Mr. Harding did what he ought to have done long before. He gave her a lecture on the dangers of unreflecting choice; he instanced many couples who had wed in haste only to

repent at leisure; he drew a graphic picture of the utter misery of existence of an ill-assorted couple, held together by nothing but legal bonds. It was very fine, but it did not interest Leslie. Her answer to it all was, —

"But, Papa, he is different, and I don't think I can help it now; the thing is done."

Then it came to the question of what answer she should send to Tolofski, and this was more difficult. She was ready, however, to do whatever her father thought best, to say anything except a decided "no." She felt remorse for what she called her deceit in the past, and was the more ready to obey now, trusting to time to bring everything right.

It was finally settled between them that she should say that if he worked hard and made a name for himself, thus proving worthy of the regard she felt for him, that then —well, then he might ask her father. Meantime Mr. Harding thought he would make inquiries about the young man, and take his daughter away at once, where perhaps she might change her mind about the wisdom of yielding to romantic feeling.

He talked gently and kindly, but was firm that nothing more be said between them; and Leslie yielded readily, because she thought the result sure. Of course he would work hard, and equally of course he would become famous.

Thus with her mind relieved and the mists cleared away by the best possible confessional, — that of a child to its parent, — she arose, and throwing her arms about her father's neck, gave him a whole-souled kiss of gratitude and love, such as selfishness and worldly wisdom can never get for its reward.

"I shall do just as you wish, Papa," she said, "and I never shall forget your goodness to me."

He patted her cheek gently, and his voice trembled a little as he replied, "My only wish is for your happiness, my daughter, — not only now, but for the future after I am gone."

Thus father and child understood each other; and just as they finished their talk, the door opened and Mrs. Harding entered, fresh and radiant from a successful round of calls, in which she had found most of the objectionable people out.

Mr. Harding was not a man to put off a disagreeable duty, so he said at once, —

"Harriet, Leslie has just been telling me of a very serious matter. She has received a letter from Mr. Tolofski, which she has n't shown me, but which is, I presume, a good deal such an one as I wrote to you years ago."

Mrs. Harding, standing by the table, paused in the operation of pulling off her long gloves, and turned toward her husband with a look of mingled incredulity and alarm.

"Do you mean to say," she exclaimed hastily, "that he has had the impudence — that he has sent her a proposal?"

Her mind took in only the bare statement, and did not for an instant consider the possibility of Leslie's being interested in Tolofski.

"Well," she continued, as she saw she had heard aright, "it's another lesson not to encourage that sort of men." Then turning to Leslie, "Of course you will take no notice of it."

"I think I must," answered Leslie, quietly.

Mrs. Harding looked from her daughter to her husband, and there was something in both their faces which she did not like. She flushed, and the lines of her face grew hard as she turned on Leslie, and said, —

"Is it possible that you have encouraged this fellow?"

Her tone was one of angry question, but voiced also her contemptuous disbelief in the possibility of such an action on her daughter's part. It roused Leslie into instant defence of her choice. What right had her mother to scorn one so noble and perfect? "Fellow," indeed! She forgot her fears in her indignation at such injustice, and drawing herself up, answered firmly and simply, —

"I love him, Mamma!"

For an instant Mrs. Harding seemed perfectly dazed. She put her hand to her head, looked helplessly from Leslie to her husband, and finally sank into a chair. Then, as she realized the enormity of what she had heard, her face grew hard again, and pointing to the door she said in a strained voice, —

"Go out, please; I wish to talk to your father."

Leslie left the room without a word. There was nothing for it but to allow her father to fight the battle alone. She did not realize the crushing blow dealt her mother in the few simple words she had uttered, but passed out full of anger and bitterness of spirit.

The trouble which the wise Fred had foreseen had come upon the Harding family, and it would be difficult to tell which member of it was the most wretchedly uncomfortable in consequence. Oh, Love, thou wretched sprite! 'T is sport for thee to stand with blindfold eyes and shoot at hearts, but there are some already who say thou art more a devil than a god.

When the door closed upon her daughter, Mrs. Harding turned with flashing eyes to her husband, and said, in a voice trembling with suppressed emotion, —

"Do you mean to say, George, that you have encouraged her in this crazy thing?"

Mr. Harding's face was very grave as he answered, —

"I have done what I thought best and right in the matter, Harriet."

Then he told her shortly what he had said to Leslie, and that she was willing to yield to his wishes.

His tone and manner were such as she was accustomed to respect, but the suddenness of this news had overpowered her. Though she had nothing better to suggest than the course her husband had already advised, she stormed, almost raved indeed, upbraiding her daughter, her husband, and finally herself. It was a painful scene, and one utterly distasteful to Mr. Harding; but he kept cool, saying very little till the first burst of his wife's passion had passed, and with tears of vexation and disappointed ambition she cried, —

"Oh, George, this is terrible! How could she deceive me so?"

"I don't think she meant to deceive any one," he answered. "Leslie is very honest. The thing is done, and we must make the best of it."

"There is no *best* to it," she exclaimed. "I

would rather see her dead than marry such a man!"

"Harriet," said Mr. Harding, gravely, "don't let your feelings carry you too far. We have lived a good many years together, and our differences have been small. I have sometimes thought of late years that you considered the world's opinion more than was necessary. Remember that, after all, our daughter's happiness should be more to us than anything else, and don't act toward her so that, if anything happens which we both desire to prevent, you may lose not only your influence but her love as well."

"I am acting for her best interests," she replied, "you know I am; and I tell you she shall never marry that man while I live. She does n't know what is best for herself. All this idiotic talk about earnest character and high aims, and I don't know what else, has turned her head. We both of us have been blind fools. What can I have been thinking of?"

Thus this woman talked on in the bitterness of her disappointment, learning nothing from

the past, and hardening her heart for the future. She had but begun to reap what she had sown. After a time, however, she came to see the common-sense of her husband's decision, and yielded to it the more readily as Munroe was going with them to Nice. She believed him to be in love with Leslie, and her experience had led her to think that with time and fair opportunity a rich man will take the lead from a poor one. The opportunity should not be wanting, and the result she would trust to time, Munroe's pleasing manners, and his money.

Meantime, Fred coming from his room met Leslie pacing restlessly up and down the long corridor. Seeing her disturbed look, he said, lightly, —

"What's up, Leslie?"

She was very fond of her cousin, and his pleasant face and cheerful tone seemed good to her now. Taking his arm at once, she said, —

"Fred, dear, I would n't go into the salon just now. Papa and Mamma are talking, and — and — I want them to finish."

There was a certain flush in her face and

hesitation in her tone which caused Fred instantly to surmise what the talk was about; but he looked the picture of innocence, as he said, —

"What 's the row, — Bric-à-brac?"

Then Leslie told him, under promise of secrecy, all the exciting events of the day. It was a comfort to talk to some one of about her own age, and she instinctively trusted Fred.

He listened with great interest, but did not show the surprise she expected. Finally he began to fumble in his pockets, and at last pulled out his unfinished sketch of Cupid on an easel, and presented it with a little bow.

"Ah, Fred," she said, as she looked at it and smiled, "don't make fun! Indeed, it 's too serious, and I want you to be my friend. I 'm all alone," and the corners of her mouth drooped as she remembered what she had promised, and that the very next day they were going away.

Fred was somewhat embarrassed by her confidences, and more touched than he cared to show. He patted the hand which rested on

his arm, in a patronizing way, and said, "All right, Leslie, never fear, I'll stand by you;" and as they walked up and down and she continued her story, he thought, "Girls are queer things; but Leslie is the right sort, and I'm on her side."

Thus it happened that one good thing came to Leslie Harding that day, for she won a loyal and steadfast friend, who afterward was often a comfort and help to her.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHEN Leslie next saw her mother alone, very little was said between them on the topic which interested them the most. Mrs. Harding, knowing how useless it is to argue on such subjects, had settled on the line of action she would take, which was to ignore the whole matter, and treat her daughter as if it had never been. Therefore she merely said, —

"Leslie, your father and I have talked over this foolish affair of yours, and I wish you to know that I am deeply grieved that you did not consult me before. As it is, I can only say that I shall never under any circumstances give my consent to such a match, nor do I in future care to hear it discussed."

She said this very quietly, but in a set, formal way, and with a certain compression of the lips which showed that she had considered her words and meant them to be final.

Leslie knew well that they were so, but she was grieved and disappointed. Her mother had never been anything but indulgent and good to her, and she longed now for her sympathy and advice; therefore she made one more attempt at reconciliation and mutual understanding. It was a useless waste of time. The gulf was already too wide to cross, and finally she went to her room with a heavy heart, seeing nothing but storm and difficulty before her.

Then she sat down to answer Tolofski's letter. It was no easy task, for after a fashion it was a public document. She began half-a-dozen and tore them up, as saying too much or too little; finally, in despair, she finished one which said merely: "Work on and succeed for my sake. I cannot say more. When you have done this, let me know. We go to Nice to-morrow, and I must not see you again." She had a little trouble to decide how she should sign it, but finally wrote, "with best wishes, Leslie."

That evening she read it to her father, who smiled, but thought on the whole that it was as little as he could ask her to write.

The next morning she went out herself to post it, and after this was done shut herself in her room, and gave way to dreams of future happiness.

If it had been a long day for Leslie, it had also been a hard one for Tolofski. He was in an agony of suspense, and worked himself into a state of mind which feared everything and hoped very little. He would have given a great deal to have his letter back. The words and sentences he had used filled his mind, dancing up and down till they were a torment. He had left a thousand things unsaid. He had said too much. What would she think? "I've been too hasty, as usual," he thought; "she is n't prepared for it. I ought to have waited till I had accomplished something, and then spoken out like a man; but I could n't, I could n't."

It was useless trying to work. Art is a jealous mistress, and feeling herself neglected took revenge. Worst of all, there was no one to talk to or advise with. He started for a walk, and mechanically turned into the Louvre. Wander-

ing through its extensive corridors, he suddenly found himself facing the commanding and yet lovely figure of the Venus de Milo. Her serene face looked down at him as he gazed, and its lines seemed to soften into a look of protecting kindness.

"A goddess indeed!" he murmured, and felt a ray of comfort as he turned away. Nevertheless he ate his dinner with little appetite, and spent the evening wandering aimlessly about the streets till mind and body were alike faint.

Badly fitted, this man, to meet the heavy blows which life brings to most of us!

The early post next day brought no letter, and Tolofski sat idle and disconsolate in his studio till about noon, when he went to Teresa's for lunch. It was early, and the only person there was Munroe, the man of all others he would have avoided. It was, however, too late to withdraw, so greeting him politely he took a seat on the other side of the room.

"You are sad, Monsieur," said the observant and ever cheerful Teresa, as she came up to receive his order. Her constant solicitude for

his comfort often astonished and sometimes annoyed Tolofski. He did not know that years before, when Teresa's wrinkled cheeks were plump and rosy, and her failing eyes sparkling with life and passion, a man had come just as the artist came now, but going, had taken all Teresa's heart. He did not know, and no one knew, how this old woman had then fought despair, and moaned and cried in secret because of the wrong done her; nor had any one noticed how white Teresa's face had grown the first time she ever saw Tolofski, or how she swayed in her chair behind the desk and clutched its edge to keep from falling. It had been like a vision from the dead, for he was the image of the man whom she had loved and tried in vain to hate.

Munroe, looking across, saw that Teresa was right; the artist's face was worn and sad. He saw too that Tolofski wished to avoid him, but was determined that so small a matter as his little outbreak of the day before should not prevent their parting friends. It was but natural that Leslie should have attracted him. She

was going away, and the painter would soon forget her in his work.

Having finished his chop and glass of wine, Munroe crossed the room and sat down by Tolofski's side, making some ordinary remark about the weather. Tolofski moved uneasily in his seat, but neither responded nor looked up. Munroe waited a second, and then going directly to the point, said pleasantly, —

"I 'm afraid you were annoyed with me the other day, Tolofski; I hardly know why. But I 'm going away to-night, not to return, and we 've been too good friends to quarrel over nothing; isn 't it so?"

While Munroe was speaking, the color had rushed into Tolofski's face. He had not expected this direct appeal to his better sense, and for a moment was thoroughly ill at ease, but he could not resist Munroe's friendly tones; there seemed to be in them a promise of that sympathy which he had longed for so much. He forgot his jealousy in his anxiety for advice, and in an instant had decided what to do.

Turning to Munroe he said earnestly, "I was

at fault. It was because I was upset. Will you come to my studio? I want to talk to you."

In a few moments they were seated in the small room which served Tolofski as a workplace. His unfinished salon picture stood on the easel, carefully covered with a white cloth. Various studies were fastened to the walls, or standing with their gray backs turned out. The floor was bare, and the furniture of the plainest sort.

Tolofski mechanically changed his coat for his working jacket, and picking up his knife began to scrape the color from his palette. Munroe waited patiently. Presently the artist laid the palette down and began to drum gently on the table with his knife.

"The fact is, Munroe," he said, "I've been a fool."

"Most of us have, some time or another."

"Yes," exclaimed Tolofski. "Yes; but — you have n't much time to spare, have you?"

"Not a great deal, it's true, for my packing is n't finished; but if I can do anything — "

"I don't know that you can," interrupted

Tolofski, "and perhaps I ought n't to have asked you here, — I 'm always doing hasty things; but I 've no one to talk to or consult with, and — " he went on rapidly now — " I feel that I owe some explanation to you. You introduced me to the Hardings', and I 've made a fool of myself. Well, it 's done now."

" But," said Munroe, not following his drift, " it was nothing at all. Why make such a serious matter of a mere trifle? Miss Harding has probably forgotten it by this time."

" No, she has n't! You don't know," said Tolofski, hastily. " It is this. I wrote a letter to Miss Harding day before yesterday, after leaving you, and told her that I loved her."

" The devil you did!" ejaculated Munroe, fairly startled out of his politeness; " and has she answered it?"

" No."

There was silence for a moment. Munroe thought rapidly, " I ought to tell him that I 'm interested in her, — it 's only fair; but it will do no good now. He has ruined his chances, if he ever had any." Then he said with an uneasy

laugh, "I must say you 've lost no time;" and hesitating, "are you quite in a position to marry?"

"It 's that I wanted to talk to you about," answered Tolofski. "I know I should n't have written. I feel that I 've been foolish, but if there 's any chance for me, it will be after I have done something. Do you think me capable of good work? Tell me honestly, for heaven's sake!"

Munroe felt guilty in allowing him to go on, but lacked the courage to stop him; so he answered frankly enough, —

"So far as I 'm able to judge, you have great talent, and I expect to see you a famous artist."

"Thank you," said Tolofski, simply. "I 've been awfully down lately. I must make my own way. I have n't much money. My father died years ago, or was killed, — I never knew exactly about it, — leaving quite a fortune to my mother. It all happened when I was a mere child, and strangely enough I've never known his history; there was some mystery, and I fear an unpleasant one, for my mother never men-

tioned his name. She was a German, and met my father here in Paris, I believe, in some romantic way. We lived all our lives — my sister and I — in Germany, until about a year and a half ago, when my mother died, leaving, as was right, most of the money to Illyne. Since then, I 've been working here, and was satisfied and happy till — till — "

" Yes, I understand," said Monroe.

" Well, I don't know why I tell you all this, but somehow I felt to-day at lunch that I must. You are going away, and you have been very kind always. Whatever happens, I am grateful to you for taking me there. I 've disgraced myself, and you too I suppose; but what I wanted to say was, if, in case she should ever say anything about it — you might — perhaps you would n't mind telling her that at least I was honest, and — and that I 'll never trouble her any more."

He arose and paced two or three times across the studio.

Munroe was touched to the heart, and felt like a miserable hypocrite as he listened. " It 's as near a dishonest thing as I ever did," he

thought; yet he could not bring himself to speak of his own feelings. Indeed, he was involuntarily contrasting the nature of this man's naïve confession of complete surrender to the power of love, with his own moderate and sensible attempt to walk into that delectable state. Finally he. arose, and holding out his hand, said, —

"I appreciate your confidence in me, Tolofski, though I 'm truly unworthy of it. I don't know what to advise. I must think it all over; perhaps it will come out right in the end. Now I must hurry off. Good-by; I 'll write you from Nice."

They shook hands, and Munroe hastened to his rooms, his mind in a confused state, and with an indefinite sense of having done something dishonorable.

Tolofski took no note of Munroe's manner. He had done what he thought right, and had again blundered into doing the best thing for himself.

An hour later the letter from Leslie came. When he saw how short it was he dreaded to

read it. After he had done so, the revulsion of feeling was so great that at first he scarcely realized what a happiness had come to him; but he knew instinctively how much her few words meant, and saw that she was braving the opposition of her family for his sake. Again and again he read the words, "Work on and succeed for my sake." Ah! he would if it lay in human power to do so. Then rising, he went to his picture, so long neglected. He took off the cover, and stood looking at it with moist eyes.

"You must do this great thing for me," he said.

Finally he thought of Munroe, and started at once for his rooms; but his friend had gone, leaving orders to have his luggage sent to the station. Then the desire for work came to Tolofski, and returning, he sat at his easel till dark, finding that his old delicacy and sureness of touch had come back. His eyes were bright, and he smiled when at last he rose to put away his brushes.

"After all," he said to himself, "the sunshine we paint must come from within."

After dinner he thought of Munroe again, and decided to go to the station on the chance of seeing him, and perhaps Leslie; surely she would not object to so much.

It was a long walk, but before he realized it he was entering the waiting-room. As he came in, Mrs. Harding sitting at the other end saw him. Her husband and Munroe had gone to attend to the seats. She rose instantly, and handing her shawl to Fred, said, —

"Come, Leslie, we had better go through at once. It is wiser to be on hand. You go ahead with Nora. Go on Fred, it makes me nervous to have any one behind me."

Thus she marched them through the door, never once turning her head till they had passed into the semi-obscurity of the long station beyond. Tolofski saw the movement, and knew that Mrs. Harding had seen him. He stood a moment hesitating, and then turned and retraced his steps.

The first victory was Mrs. Harding's; the first wound, his. But he pressed the precious letter close to his heart, and forgot the pain.

CHAPTER IX.

THE long ride from Paris to the coast was not particularly cheerful. To be sure, the Hardings were fortunate enough to secure a carriage by themselves, owing, as Mrs. Harding suspected, to an extravagant bribe which Munroe had placed in the hands of the proper official; but it was warm and uncomfortable at best, and at every large station the attendants insisted on putting in a fresh supply of hot-water cans, necessitating a change of attitude, and a pulling about of bags and bundles. Moreover, every one seemed depressed and quite unable to arouse themselves to be entertaining.

Mrs. Harding did not try. Once settled in her corner, with her cloaks and cushions properly adjusted, she sat silent. She was too old a traveller to waste her energies by talking at the beginning of a long journey. She did not

sleep, but with head thrown comfortably back, eyes closed, and hands folded in her lap, she put mind and body into that quiescent state, which is almost suspended animation. Only those who have a thorough appreciation of themselves, a conscience void of offence, and a good digestion can do this; and all these Mrs. Harding possessed.

Leslie on the opposite side of the car was absorbed in her own thoughts, still exploring in that new country which she had so recently discovered, and sat gazing abstractedly out of the window.

Munroe was furtively watching her. He had a secret in his possession to which he felt that he had no right, but which made this process interesting. Could it be possible that he was mistaken in her? Was she after all a coquette like all the rest; or, worst of all, could she have taken a fancy to the painter? He could not believe it, and yet it was well enough to move cautiously. He had at least been warned in time, and was saved from committing himself. The risk of refusal was one that had not

occurred to him, and its possibility, now made plain, acted like a frost on the venturesome early plants of spring, throwing back the blossoming time. He even began to wonder why he had accepted Mrs. Harding's invitation so hastily, and to consider the advisability of continuing his journey south to Rome.

The night wore away, and the next day passed slowly and uncomfortably, as the train rumbled along through the wet landscape. Occasionally, when there was time, our travellers walked a little in some long station, and once in a while there was a feeble attempt at conversation, which died out from lack of general support. Mr. Harding dozed a good deal, and was inclined to be cross when he awoke. Fred was reading a novel. Leslie asked him languidly what it was.

"One of those confounded Scotch stories," he snapped out, "where they're forever catching salmon. They've caught one in every chapter for the last ten, and each fish goes through the same performance of sulking and boring and cutting cantrips, and you have to hear the shriek

of the reel and see their gleaming silver sides, till it makes me tired. I always hated salmon cooked, and now I hate 'em alive."

"That's rather tough criticism," laughed Munroe; "all that is the 'color' in the story, you know."

"If it's so disagreeable, why do you keep on reading, Fred?" asked Leslie.

"One must do something," answered he, settling his head comfortably in the angle of the seat; "and besides I want to see what becomes of the stupid things."

At last they approached the coast, and the country became more hilly and interesting. The olive-trees began to appear on the hill-sides, there was an occasional tunnel, and finally a glimpse of the sea itself; but it rained persistently, and the expected warm sun and blue sky were lacking.

At the Nice station there was a grand gathering together of wraps and parcels, and the Hardings stepped out into the motley crowd which filled the platform. The train for Monte Carlo was about to start, and there was an interesting

exhibition of fast-looking men and women on their way to that brilliant haunt of pleasure-seekers. As the party walked toward the exit, they could see through the round arch at the end the coast mountains standing out dimly through the rain, and on one the walls and round top of the observatory, the only white object in the landscape.

At last the luggage was looked after, and the numerous bags deposited in the cavernous omnibus, which splashed along the Avenue de Gare to their hotel. Scarcely a word was spoken; apparently the cold and damp had penetrated their winter garments and entered their souls, — an ill-omened beginning to their stay at Nice, and it took Leslie a long time to shake off the feeling that her youth and happiness were left behind her. Even Fred looked somewhat morose, as he stepped out of the omnibus into a puddle of water, and raised his umbrella to shelter his aunt.

However, dinner put rather a different aspect on things. The long dining-room was light and cheerful; the servants were alert and

attentive, and notwithstanding the hum of voices it seemed quiet after the clatter and rumble of the train. A sense of comfort steamed up from the excellent soup, and good-humor gleamed from the wine-glasses. Then, too, from their side-table it was rather amusing to make comments on the various degrees of ugliness displayed by the fifty or sixty persons at the table d'hôte.

"Worse than usual, don't you think?" said Munroe.

"Yes," sighed Mrs. Harding. "I'm afraid so."

Such sweeping condemnation is quite common under such circumstances, but is nearly always unjust. The eye is at first attracted by the glaring colors and bad taste, just as it is in a large collection of pictures; but afterward begins a process of intelligent selection, and the quiet bits of beauty become apparent. It is well to remember, also, that in such a place some of the people will perhaps take a long time to find out that you yourself are not one of the baser sort, though of course this ought to be apparent at a glance.

The Hardings were not, however, dependent

on chance acquaintances made in this way. They had spent several seasons at Nice, and knew every one worth knowing; and it became evident to Munroe the next day, when he took a short walk with them, that the contents of some of the Paris boxes would soon be needed.

Progress along the promenade was slow, owing to constant greetings and hand-shakings, accompanied by the bursts of affection with which dear friends of the world of fashion usually deluge one another. Natural cordiality of manner was one of Mrs. Harding's most charming characteristics; she never lost a friend through lack of it. Mrs. Gordon called it mere hypocrisy, but then Mrs. Gordon lacked the gift of remembering names and faces.

Our party met this lady gorgeously apparelled, leading a white French poodle by a broad blue ribbon. With her was a handsome hard-faced man, whom she introduced as Prince Turgeoff, of Russia. "A most fascinating creature," she whispered to Mrs. Harding, as they parted; "he has just broken the bank at Monte Carlo."

The clouds had broken into heavy masses,

which were drifting lazily toward the sea horizon; the sun felt comfortably warm, and the waves tumbled merrily in over the pebbles; the carriages with their occupants made a brave show on the drive, and now and then the promenaders paused to look after some specially flashing turnout with its prancing horses, clanking chains, and perfectly attired young gentleman on the box, — a bright varied scene, full of movement and color, and our friends drifting along with the tide of well-dressed people on the broad walk soon began to feel its influence, and to forget the dreary skies of yesterday.

As they turned to go back, Mrs. Harding said, "This is what I like about Nice: one meets one's friends right away, and gets into the swim at once."

"Suppose one does n't care to?" suggested her husband.

But such a supposition was beyond the range of possibilities in Mrs. Harding's mind, and she received its suggestion in silence. To her the process was easy and delightful. It was a giving and receiving arrangement, meant to

keep life bright and cheerful. It meant social intercourse with witty people, good dinners, receptions, operas, flowers, light laughter, and pleasant excitement. She never tired of it; indeed, to her it was life itself.

Surely, there was nothing wrong in all this; and if occasionally some one of those who were drifting along the bright current went wrong, and were stranded or swept under, and there were scandals, and the mud at the bottom was stirred up, why, it was not her fault. Always there will be silly and weak people, and they must drop out and others take their places.

As our friends were going up the stairs together at the hotel two ladies were coming down. One was a fine-looking blonde, handsomely dressed, and unmistakably German; the other, a tall dark girl, with a grave face.

As they approached, Munroe had a passing sensation of having seen the latter before, but probably would not have thought of it again had he not seen Leslie give a start when she noticed the ladies, and then turn with an eager look and follow them with her eyes till

they disappeared around the corner below. Ordinarily he would have asked her who they were, without hesitation; but there had been a slight restraint between them ever since they left Paris, and now as he caught her eye when she finally turned, there was a look in it that forbade any questions. He entered the Hardings' salon with them, but Leslie excused herself at once on the plea of fatigue, and after chatting a few moments with Mrs. Harding, Munroe took Fred and went out for a farther stroll.

In a short time the family was deluged with cards and invitations, and Nora's duties grew suddenly more arduous than ever. The Paris boxes had to be unpacked, and it was her duty to know where each particular gown was put. The round of gayety was in full swing, and afternoon receptions and teas were succeeded by evening entertainments in a way that left little time for anything else. Nor did things go on in that smooth comfortable way to which Nora was accustomed. She always took the greatest pride in dressing Miss Leslie; but now

her young lady seemed to take very little interest in the process, and was apt to say in a bored way, "Oh, bring me anything; I don't care how I look!" and sometimes she was cross and unreasonable in a way which showed to the faithful maid that something had gone very wrong. Nora did not hesitate to ask direct questions, but Leslie refused to give her any information, other than that she "was tired of the whole thing."

Indeed, it was difficult for Leslie in her present state of mind to be entertaining to people for whom she cared nothing. She did her best to do what was expected; but her mother, now especially watchful, noticed that she was often absent-minded, and even more frigid in her manner than usual. The fact was, her thoughts were elsewhere.

With Munroe, Leslie had become distinctly formal. An unreasonable feeling of irritation had grown up in her mind toward him because he was able to leave Paris on the whim of the moment, when others could not. Moreover she resented his being one of their party, not know-

ing the gentle pressure which had been brought to bear on him to become such. Finally this feeling rose to one of positive indignation, after a woman she knew but slightly had asked her,—with that brutal directness which a man would have been afraid to use toward another,—if she were engaged to that fine-looking fellow who was with them. After this she avoided Munroe as far as she could, and succeeded in making him thoroughly uncomfortable; for he already saw the false position he was in, and realized that he was making no progress in Leslie's favor.

It was an uncomfortable time for both of them, but perhaps Leslie had the best of it after all; for as she sat listening to the youthful attaché of the British Consul's office, who told her she "was quite like an English girl," or to the enthusiastic chatter of Miss Rich from Chicago, her thoughts flew away to Paris. A thousand times she went over her different interviews with Tolofski, and often wondered how one so noble and earnest and altogether perfect could care for her, a mere society girl. But he did! he did! She knew this, and the

glad thought carried her over many difficulties filling her heart and dancing through her brain when she ought to have been thinking of what to say next to her partner at the german, or to the old lady in her mother's salon. But sometimes unpleasant thoughts came too, and she felt lonely and hopeless.

Nor were things any pleasanter when it was discovered that Fred, who had soon become intimate with young Dick Margrave — the son of Sir Thomas — and his set, had come home very late in an exhilarated condition, flourishing a champagne bottle in which was an enormous bouquet, and had gone to his room under guidance of the porter, disturbing pretty much everybody on his floor before he finally consented to go to bed. The porter told the chambermaid, and she told Nora, who told Leslie; and when in mingled grief and indignation that young lady had attempted to remonstrate with her cousin the following afternoon, he had said rudely that girls who made a mess of their own affairs ought not to meddle with his. Certainly she might have chosen a better time

to speak with him, for his head ached, and he was just enough ashamed of himself to resent interference from any one; but that Fred should speak rudely to her, — Fred, who had always been so kind and thoughtful, — it was too much. It was time something happened to put a different aspect on affairs; and something did happen that very night.

They went to a musicale given by a middle-aged American woman who had recently purchased a beautiful villa, and was married to a young Italian Count, whom she had acquired at about the same time. When the somewhat limited demands made by her husband on her affections were satisfied, she gave the rest of her heart to music and the arts. She was a useful and popular member of society. The music was never of an exhaustive kind, the suppers were all that could be desired, her house was full of delightfully retired nooks and corners, and she herself was stout, good-natured, and near-sighted.

What more delicious than to sit under the becoming light of colored lanterns, in the shadow

of some fragrant vine, listening to the sweet harmonies of the orchestra within, mingled with the distant throb of the ocean and the whispers of the breeze through the foliage, and there drink in with the balmy air the passionate tones of a lover, who is swearing eternal devotion! What matters it that you expect to refuse him, and that he expects to be refused? — the time, the place, the surroundings, are fit for love. Then let love reign, and the world be grateful to the Countess Sevasti!

As Madame was receiving her guests, two ladies entered and advanced to greet her. One of them she evidently knew, for she addressed her at once as "my dear Baroness;" then she smiled and bowed to the other as the Baroness said, —

"Let me introduce to you my friend, Miss Tolofski."

When this name was pronounced, three persons standing near turned instantly and gazed at its owner. One was Leslie, one was Munroe, and the last, the Prince Turgeoff, who had recently broken the bank at Monte Carlo.

CHAPTER X.

WHAT Miss Illyne Tolofski's three observers saw, was a tall simply dressed girl, with a clear dark complexion and very black hair, making that old-fashioned but always sweet courtesy with which German young ladies salute their elders.

Munroe glanced at Leslie. Her cheeks were red, and she had involuntarily taken a step forward as if to address Miss Tolofski. She had recognized the faces they had seen on the stairs at the hotel, and knew why this one had seemed familiar.

If Prince Turgeoff had any special interest in the young lady, his face did not show it, — that rarely showed anything; but he gazed curiously and steadily at her, and if one could have looked under his mustache, one would have seen a smile on his lips, — an unpleasant

little smile, which often came there unobserved by those with whom he was talking. It is doubtful if the Prince himself was aware of this habit. It was perhaps more an involuntary contraction of the muscle than anything else, and generally indicated some degree of mental excitement rather than amusement.

The worst that the world knew about Prince Turgeoff was that he was a confirmed gambler; the best, that he was a Prince. But many men are gamblers, and few are Princes. The world therefore forgave the evil for the sake of the good. It was the old story, — virtuous society at one moment lifting its hands in horror, and condemning innocence unheard; and the next, covering with the mantle of charity the sins of its agreeable men.

The present Russian dynasty, when it took their landed possessions from Prince Turgeoff's family years before, had given them an hereditary title and an annuity amounting to about five hundred pounds a year. This income the present Prince enjoyed; but his tastes were expensive, and it became necessary to do something

to increase his funds. What occupation was open to one so exalted? Evidently none but gambling, which has always been open to impecunious gentlemen.

The Prince was now about fifty years old, but looked much younger, so well preserved and handsome was he. His head was finely shaped and well set on. His hair, with its just perceptible curl, was cut short and brushed straight back from his forehead. He wore no beard, and if there were a few gray hairs in his mustache they only enhanced his fresh complexion. His eyes were small, gray, and rather deep-set. They were quite capable of "that rude desecrating stare which," as George Eliot says, "to a refined mind is as intolerable as a bad odor or a flaring light;" but they were usually veiled, and wore a society expression of polite interest, for he had fascinating manners, had been everywhere, knew everybody, and could talk charmingly when he chose. He was a type, indeed, of a certain class of men whom society allows to roam at will through its drawing-rooms, befouling its sons and daughters with their vile

touch, because they come placarded, "Gentlemen."

The Count Sevasti was Prince Turgeoff's admirer, and considered himself his confidential friend. The confidence was, however, one-sided. The Count told the Prince everything, and thought that he received something in return; but the fact was that Turgeoff trusted nobody. He was a good absorber, but a poor radiator. The moderate sums which his American wife gave the Count generally found their way into the Prince's pocket, at the Club where they played Baccarat together. The Prince was willing to give his friendship and confidence, such as it was, to any gentleman who paid the price; and it is humiliating to have to confess that among those who considered an association with him desirable were several free-born American citizens, who were attracted by his high-sounding title, and whom he made pay well for the privilege of his acquaintance. Sadder still, these were not all of the male sex. Some people who could not aspire so high, and consequently were enemies of all aristocracy, whis-

pered that Madame Gordon was really infatuated with the man, and that he derived quite an income from her, and through her, by playing cards at her apartments.

Certainly Madame Gordon was an ambitious woman and had a marriageable daughter, but the tongue of envy exaggerates and is often malicious. This is what Mrs. Harding said when she heard this story; and if certain subsequent remarks rather took away the effect of her charity, we must believe that she only wished simple justice done.

Just now the Prince seemed to be forgetting his manners, for he had turned half away from Mrs. Gordon, to whom he had been talking, and seemed fascinated by Miss Tolofski's face. He was recalled to his duty by a slight pressure of Mrs. Gordon's fingers on his arm.

"I beg your pardon," he said, turning quickly.

"Not at all; but do you know that you broke off in the middle of a sentence to gaze at that religious-looking brunette? Who is she?"

"I thought her face seemed familiar, that was

all. Probably I was mistaken; shall we go into the music-room?"

As Mrs. Gordon took his arm, she grasped it with a vigor that showed an aroused state of feeling. "You don't deceive me in the least," she said in a low tone. "You know that girl, and I shall watch you and her."

To which the Prince replied, without looking at her, "Oh, don't make a fool of yourself!"

Alas, for our good opinion of Mrs. Gordon! It must end here; for through the window of these words we look in and see weak vanity betrayed by passing desire, a jealous woman, and a man who no longer cares or thinks it necessary to conciliate, — an unpleasant sight, which we come upon not infrequently in our walk through life; one that does not even arouse our sympathy. Sometimes we pity, but it is usually wiser to pass by as quickly as we may, and interest ourselves in honester people.

Mrs. Gordon flushed with anger at the Prince's words, but there was no chance to reply, and she dropped his arm as they entered the music-

room. She was not a thin-skinned or over-sensitive woman, but she felt the sting of the master's whip in this man's brutal sentence, and her heart was filled with rage toward the innocent cause of her humiliation.

Thus Miss Illyne Tolofski made an enemy on her first entrance into society, and set forces in motion of which she knew nothing.

Meantime Munroe had gone directly to the Countess and said, "I happened to hear Miss Tolofski's name just now, and think I know her brother. May I beg you to introduce me to her?"

This the Countess did forthwith, and in a moment he found himself talking to the artist's sister. The impression he got from a near inspection of her face was of firmness and strength rather than of great beauty. The mouth was rather large, but finely formed, with strong curved lines; the nose not quite straight, but of good size; the eyes brown, set wide apart, and shaded by heavy black lashes. As she acknowledged his bow with a slight inclination, she looked at him frankly, but the conventional

smile was lacking. Her voice was pleasant, and her English just imperfect enough to make it charming. There was a quiet, self-contained look in her eyes, but also one of sadness, as if she might sometime have suffered much.

"An intelligent face," Munroe thought, "and a sweet one."

After a word or two, she introduced him to her friend the Baroness Kaldenberg, a handsome blonde, whose white teeth, blue eyes, and red cheeks lighted up a considerable space wherever she happened to be. Other people coming up, the Baroness drifted away, and Munroe was able to talk to Miss Tolofski alone. He began by saying that he had seen her at his hotel that afternoon.

"Ah, yes, I remember," she replied; "and was it you who so looked at us as we went down the stairs?"

"I'm afraid I must plead guilty," he answered. "But how could you know? We only saw the back of your head."

"I cannot tell; I had a feeling. One always knows, I think, if one is under inspection."

"If you noticed my staring, I'm glad of the opportunity to explain why I did so. Your face struck me as being very familiar. Now I think I know why. I fancy I've made your brother's acquaintance at Paris."

"My brother Serge! do you know him? I'm so pleased." And her face lighted up with a new interest.

"We are great friends. I lunched with him only a few days ago, and left him quite well. He spoke of you, but did not mention that you were to be here."

"No, he did not know it,— I started quite unexpectedly; and, indeed, our letters are rather infrequent at best."

"You will be pleased to learn that he is doing excellent work. I think you will soon have occasion to be proud of him."

"I am always proud of him," she answered quickly, "and know he will succeed, if something does not happen to dishearten him. Always he has been very sensitive, like a girl almost; he cannot help it. And you! are you an artist, too?"

"No, I 'm nothing; simply an idler."

"Ah, that is a pity!" she said gravely; and then thinking of her brother, she looked at Munroe contemplatively, as if to see if he were worthy to be his friend, and added, "But you look good!" and then, "You are English, are you not?"

"No, American," replied he, a little overcome by her naïve scrutiny.

"American? It is a good country, I think. You have not rank there; but if one is upright and honest, that is rank for them, is it not? One time I saw a great ship start from Hamburg filled with our German poor, and truly my heart went with them."

"Your countrymen should be happy, if they carried away your heart," said Munroe, with glib compliment.

She looked at him quietly, without smiling, and said, "I fear I express myself stupidly in English, and that you laugh at me."

"No, believe me!" he answered earnestly, "and the stupidity was mine."

At this point they were interrupted by Count

Sevasti, who appeared with Prince Turgeoff, and introduced that gentleman to Miss Tolofski.

Munroe knew the Prince, and disliked him. Not caring to enter into general conversation, he turned to pass on. As he did so, Miss Tolofski said, "I shall see you again at the hotel, shall I not? I have so many questions to ask about my brother."

As Munroe was making his way through the crowded room, some one touched him on the arm. He turned, and there was Leslie.

"Was she his sister?" she asked eagerly.

Her manner and words gave Munroe food for reflection. He looked at her steadily a second, and then said coolly, "Was who, whose sister?"

Leslie blushed scarlet. She realized that she had betrayed herself.

Munroe pitied her confusion, and added quickly, as if it had just occurred to him, "Oh, you mean, is Miss Tolofski a sister of our friend the artist? Yes, she is, and she seems very pleasant, too."

Leslie's eyes were cast down as he said this. "He knew perfectly well whom I meant," she

thought, and on the spot registered a vow to make Munroe's life as uncomfortable as possible. Subsequent events caused her to forgive him, but he had tried a dangerous experiment all the same.

Meantime Turgeoff was talking to Miss Tolofski, and while he talked kept his eyes fixed in such evident scrutiny on her face that she became uncomfortable. Finally he said abruptly,

"Your mother died more than a year ago, did she not?"

"Yes," she answered, looking at him wonderingly; "and did you know my sweet mother?"

She gave him a quick anxious look as she asked this question, but his reply seemed to quiet her.

For an instant the dreamer's look came into the Prince's face. "I knew her years ago," he said, "before you were born. You have her voice and manner."

Then, as if recalling himself from unpleasant memories, he again changed the subject abruptly, and after a few words, excused himself and walked away.

Miss Tolofski gazed after him a moment in a dazed way, and then with something very like a shudder turned to look for her chaperon. That pleasant lady was close at hand, and Illyne sought relief from her unexplainable nervousness by questioning her.

"Do you know the gentleman who was talking to me just now?" she asked.

"Yes; that was Prince Turgeoff, a Russian. I met him in Berlin last winter."

"He said he knew my mother years ago."

"Did he? Well?"

"Well, I do not like him. He made me feel strangely."

"What it is to have nerves! Bless you, child! at this rate you will be in a shiver from morning to night. Treat them all alike, as I do. Now, for instance, here comes a woman who is most disagreeable to me.

"Ah, Madame Gordon, I am pleased to meet you again. How is your sweet daughter, who sings so charmingly? Illyne, dear, you must hear Miss Gordon sing. Madame, this is my dear friend Miss Tolofski."

"It was for the pleasure of meeting her that I crossed the room," said Mrs. Gordon, sweetly. Then she plunged at once into an animated talk, involving the personal appearance and reputation of nearly every one there.

To this Illyne listened, half shocked and half amused. Suddenly Mrs. Gordon turned to her and said, "I saw you talking to Prince Turgeoff just now; have you known him long?"

"No; I have met him for the first time to-night."

Mrs. Gordon glanced keenly at her as she said this, and seemed satisfied.

"Ah," she said, "I had somehow an impression that you were old friends. Well, the Prince is very amusing and very fascinating, and they tell me very wicked; but he does n't look it, does he?"

"I cannot tell as to that," answered Illyne, who was appealed to; "but I did not like him."

"How deliciously frank!" laughed Mrs. Gordon. "I really must tell the Prince, it will do him good;" and she turned away thinking,

"That girl is an idiot or awfully bright, and either way needs watching."

"That girl" was neither one nor the other, — simply honest, where honesty seemed out of place; and the Baroness scolded her for it afterward.

Later in the evening Illyne found some one she did like, for she was introduced to Leslie; and that young lady was so cordial and sweet, and looked so pretty with the color fluttering in her cheeks as she talked, that Illyne fairly lost her heart to her.

In crossing the room after her interview with Miss Tolofski, Leslie met her mother, who asked casually to whom she had just been talking.

Leslie hesitated, fearing to mention the name, but remembering that Illyne's chaperon had been there also, said, "To the Baroness Kaldenberg, Mamma."

"Ah," said her mother, "she has a sweet, refined face. And who was the large, rather coarse-looking person with her?"

There was nothing for it now but to tell her;

so she said: "The larger, the blond one, was the Baroness; the other was Miss Tolofski."

Mrs. Harding instantly raised her lorgnette and looked steadily at the unconscious object of so much scrutiny; then she flushed, and turned away without a word.

That night as Munroe sat in his room smoking a cigar before going to bed, and trying to feel distressed and injured at what he imagined he had discovered in Leslie's face, his thoughts were broken into by the image of an earnest face, and by a pair of brown eyes looking into his, while their owner said, "Ah, that is a pity! but you look good." And later, when he was courting sleep, he thought, "Yes, I am an idler, and it is a pity; but I wonder why she said I looked good."

CHAPTER XI.

THE new conditions brought about by the appearance of the Baroness and her charge at Nice were not pleasing to Mrs. Harding. It had been difficult before to get on with Leslie, who exerted herself very little to be entertaining, and was less and less of a companion; but now, just as she began to hope that Munroe's attentions and the attractions of society might make her daughter forget an absurd fancy, Tolofski's sister must needs appear, to be a constant reminder of him, and in such company that it was impossible to ignore her.

Then, too, Mrs. Harding's mind was disturbed lest she might have underrated the Tolofskis. When she thought of it, she really knew very little about them, but had simply taken it for granted that they were nobodies

and poor. She astonished her husband one night by asking, *apropos* of nothing, if he thought it possible anybody could be decent whose name ended in "ski;" and Mr. Harding, having a vivid recollection of being once cheated by a Polish Jew, answered that he doubted if it were; and yet the young lady's appearance and position were very much in her favor. She seemed modest and attractive, and was travelling with a Baroness of well-known name. As for poverty, she showed no signs of it. On the contrary, Mrs. Harding's respect for the girl had been raised considerably because she happened to know that a price which had stopped her had not prevented Miss Tolofski from buying a lovely bit of old embroidery. This had provoked her when it happened; but the next day she looked at Miss Tolofski in a little different light, and there was a shade less of hauteur in her manner toward her.

There was one thing, however, which Mrs. Harding could not overlook, and that was a certain apparent lack of conventionality, a dis-

position to be odd. In her eyes this was a sin hard to forgive. Miss Tolofski certainly was unlike other girls of her age. She evidently understood all the usages and refinements of good society, and yet seemed curiously indifferent to it, and not of it. She talked, apparently, just as she felt; and while looking into her honest brown eyes, even Mrs. Harding, prejudiced as she was, found it difficult not to believe her sincere and good. But later, when the same directness led Miss Tolofski into certain unconventional acts, her critic began to doubt; and when at last she saw that not only Prince Turgeoff but Mr. Munroe were attracted by her, and each seemed trying to outdo the other in his attentions, Mrs. Harding forgot her good impressions, and called the girl not only deep, but actually designing.

Mrs. Harding found at this time a subject on which Mrs. Gordon and herself perfectly agreed. That attractive widow was apparently justified in her first suspicions, and in consequence went about saying everything to injure

her hated rival that long practice and a perverted mind could suggest. Her feelings were all the stronger because the Prince usually treated her hints and open charges alike with silent contempt, or if he replied at all, made some such remark as the one with which he had greeted her first attempt at investigation.

Nevertheless, it was evident that the girl had some mysterious attraction for Prince Turgeoff. He neglected no opportunity to see her, and was so marked in his attentions that the gossips began to talk. Illyne avoided him in every possible way, but in their constant round of amusements meetings were inevitable. Since his first mention of her mother he had made no reference to her past, and she had made up her mind that he did not know its history. Whenever they happened to be alone, he had a way of talking in an abstracted manner on some trivial subject, but all the while furtively watching her; and at times she had seen such a hard, almost malignant look come into his face that the poor girl, though outwardly calm, was half sick with nervous fear, and came finally to

have an almost superstitious dread of the future as connected with him.

No one but Turgeoff knew that Illyne was the link between the only romance of his life and the present; that she recalled a face which had stirred the very depths of his strong nature, and been the cause of a crime the remembrance of which was now so filling his mind that he could not rid himself of a belief that she had come as the beginning of his punishment. He well knew that the burden which her young shoulders were compelled to bear, the weight of which had already brought lines of sadness into her face, had been put there by his villany, and that the punishment which he had intended only for her parents had blackened her innocent life. Whatever instincts of manhood and pity were left in him were now at war with a desire for further revenge and with the hatred which men feel for those they have injured. The hatred was gradually getting the upper hand, for he not only failed to obtain any influence over Illyne, but felt her aversion more and more at every interview.

What Mrs. Gordon attributed to the mysterious attraction of youth and beauty, was really the working of a cruel desire to see a fair flower plucked, crushed, and thrown aside. The Madame's reign, such as it was, — a reign of elaborate toilettes, judicious exposures, delicious perfumes, becoming lights, and doubtful wit, — was not in danger from Illyne's honest attractiveness; but Mrs. Gordon was working according to the light afforded to such minds, and was the instrument of a Providence which seems at times prone to act against our ideas of poetic justice.

As for Munroe he did not acknowledge even to himself that he was attentive to Miss Tolofski. She interested him, and he found her in many ways curiously like her brother; perhaps more self-reliant in some things, but with the same honesty of thought and directness of method. He began to take pleasure in overcoming her usual grave reserve by taking opposite sides in some discussion where principle was involved, and in seeing life come into her eyes and color to her cheeks as she spoke

out bravely what she believed. He liked to call the unaccustomed smile to her lips by some curious turn of thought or quaint expression. It pleased him to represent himself worse than he was, in order to see the sober look of pity come into her face.

In point of fact, disappointed in his efforts to attract Leslie, and unsettled as to what he should do, Munroe was flirting in a most unworthy way with a girl who had a perfectly transparent and simple character, with one who in new conditions of recent misfortune and loneliness was simply grateful for kind attention, and an easy victim to false protestations coming from a person in whom she trusted. He was putting her peace of mind in danger for his own amusement; but at the same time he was beginning to feel the force of her simple purity, and the worldly spirit of unrest was being conquered and moulded by contact with it. In the indefinite reaching out of his spirit for that which would satisfy his secret longing for a better life, he had met at last an influence the strength of which he did not realize. As

yet he felt its power but little, and was content to watch with uneasy satisfaction the gradual unfolding of the bud which his sun-ship had chosen to shine upon.

And she? Well, she had looked into his eyes, and believed him good.

One day after lunch Munroe, in passing by the reception-room, saw Illyne talking to two children. Attracted by the scene, he stood a moment unobserved at the door.

A fair-haired girl of about eight years, and a rosy-cheeked boy still younger were standing on either side of Miss Tolofski's chair, looking into her eyes with that expression of rapt attention which comes over all children's faces when a story is about to be told. She held the children's hands in each of hers, and was bending toward them with the eager look of one intent on pleasing. Indifference and reserve were all gone now, and he saw her face softened by that sweet foreshadowing of maternal love which contact with young children always brings from the heart to the eyes of a pure girl.

"A new type this," he thought, and in that brief time realized the difference between a face to be loved and one to be admired.

As he passed through the door she was saying, "His name was Toby, and I did love him, — yes, with all my heart."

"I trust such devotion had its due reward," said Munroe, advancing.

For an instant an expression of annoyance passed over her face, but almost at once she said pleasantly, "Ah! you must not interrupt; see how they are interested!"

"May I stay?" asked Munroe.

"Yes, if you are quiet and do not laugh at me," she replied.

And so he sat down where he could watch her face as she unfolded the sad fate of poor Toby.

"It was one day," she began, "when I was going on a journey with some friends, and Toby would go with me even though I said no. At a large town the train stopped for some time, and we all went out to walk on the platform. Suddenly the bell rang, and the guard called out, and every one hurried to their places.

Then I looked for my pet, and he was gone. So, my dears, I was distracted. It was impossible for me to go on and leave him, and I turned about and ran up the long station, looking and calling. Then the doors shut with a bang, the engine gave a loud whistle, and off went the train with my friends. I know you think I was right to stay, do you not? But Mr. Munroe, who is smiling, thinks it was silly for me."

"No, you are mistaken," said Munroe. "The dog was n't worth it probably, but it was touching devotion."

"Indeed, he was worthy of it," she replied, "for he loved me. But you do not keep your promise; you were not to speak. Then, children, I walked into the town, among all the strange people, looking everywhere. Finally, just as I was despairing and almost ready to cry, I saw a very dirty little boy leading a very dirty little dog by a string. But black as he was, I knew at once my dear Toby; and he — oh, he was so glad! He jumped and barked, and I was so happy that I took him up just as

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he was in my arms, and I could n't scold him, for he looked so sorry to have been naughty. Well, the people turned and laughed at me, but I did n't mind. You would n't desert your friend because one laughed at you, would you?"

"No, I would n't!" said the little girl, in a burst of enthusiasm.

"Is that all?" asked the boy.

"Yes, that is all."

"Did n't he die, or anything?" persisted the boy, in a disappointed tone.

"No, he is safe at my home in Germany."

"'T wan't much of a story," said the boy, reflectively. "Now, we had a dog in Chicago, 'n' he was a hummer; but a p'liceman laid him out with a club."

Munroe laughed, and Miss Tolofski looked puzzled and was about to ask a question, when they were interrupted by the entrance of Fred and a young lady.

The latter trotted gracefully across to where Illyne was sitting, and dropped into a chair, her skirts falling about her in a way to show two

lovely little feet clothed in high-heeled slippers, and silk stockings of a color to match her gown. Her hair was braided and arranged in a coil high on her head. Through the braids was passed a long pin with a ball at the end, which glittered with gems. Her forehead was covered to the eyes with artistically mussed crimps. Her features were delicate and rather piquant, and made more striking from the fact that her eyes were rather darker than her hair. She was elaborately dressed, wore solitaire diamonds in her ears, and was fragrant with perfume.

An unprejudiced person might have said that this young lady's general make-up was inappropriate to the time and place, and that she had a somewhat artificial appearance; but there was a certain pleasing frankness in her speech and manner which invited attention, and created a desire to continue conversation with her,—a bordering on the improper, which made the women her enemies and the men her friends.

Fred was her latest conquest. His youthful cynicism and the wisdom which had seemed

beyond his years had faded in the bright light of Miss Mabel Gordon's beauty. He had been an easy victim. It had only needed at the proper moment a long straight look into his eyes and a pressure of her hand on his, and straightway this artistic combination had become an ideal, the object of his thoughts by day and dreams at night.

Innocent dog-stories at once seemed out of place, and Munroe being in a mood for innocence left, disgusted. In his room he found a letter from Serge Tolofski, and from the midst of wild flights of poetry and enthusiasm with which it abounded he managed to extract the fact that Miss Harding had practically accepted the artist.

Munroe's mind had been somewhat prepared for this news, nevertheless he was a good deal surprised at Leslie's quick surrender. He laid the letter down, and going to the open window stood a long time absorbed in thought. The air was still and mild; over the deserted promenade he could see the water and hear it pulsing with gentle melancholy noise against the stones.

The look on his face was not a cheerful one, nor were his thoughts particularly pleasant. Indeed, it was rather humiliating and even ridiculous to find that he had not been in the race at all; that an almost unknown fellow had won so easily where he had felt so confident. To be sure, he had not pretended to be madly in love, but he had made up his mind to marry, which he imagined was sufficient.

"Well," he thought finally, "the thing is done. I suppose the sacred flame was n't in me, and perhaps I should be thankful that I was saved from further disaster."

Then his mind drifted back over his career, and he was forced to come to the unflattering conclusion that it had been, so far, pretty much a failure. There was one spot, to be sure, rubbed bright by the friction of competition and hard work; but it was small, and already somewhat dim from distance, and the rest of the surface looked very neutral and uninteresting.

What was it that Miss Tolofski had answered the other day when he had been talking idly on

the uselessness of living? She had turned on him almost fiercely and said, "Why do you talk to me in that way, — you who have never even known what it is to suffer?"

He remembered her concentrated look and sudden energy of speech. "A strange girl that," he thought, "with her calm sad face, and quick outbreaks of passion. How she sweeps away sentimentality with her gusts of feeling! Such a woman, if she were interested, would force even an idler like myself to do something, out of very shame." Then he turned from the window with a little laugh, as he remembered that this girl to whom his thoughts had so quickly drifted, was the sister of his successful rival.

CHAPTER XII.

THE Prince Turgeoff was reclining in a deep-seated leather-covered chair at the Club. A thin blue stream of fragrant smoke rose in languid circles from a cigar which he held between his fingers; his eyes were half closed, and his handsome head was thrown back in an attitude of repose. It was too early yet for the habitual card-players to arrive, and there was nothing to amuse him but his thoughts.

Serious thinking was an indulgence which the Prince rarely allowed himself. The small conquests in society which he considered necessary for his amusement required but little concentration, and his serious work being gambling, success in which comes largely by inspiration, there was not much but the past to think about, and just now that was not an agreeable subject. But to-day it happened that he was

fifty years old, and as he sat gazing lazily at his nearly burned cigar, it occurred to him that the best part of his life was already consumed, and that from now on the course lay toward failing powers, and rapidly approached the end itself. From his youth he had led a hard, fast life, and while he was not disposed to moralize or indulge in any vain regrets or feelings of repentance, few of the memories that came crowding in were calculated to raise his spirits. To be sure, his life twenty-five years ago had been pleasant enough. Fortune seemed always to favor the "handsome Prince," and there were plenty of visions of "wine and women, songs and laughter," of extravagant establishments and luxurious living; but to-night, overpowering all these, was the bitter thought of his failure to win the only woman he ever really loved, — Illyne's mother, — and of the crimes into which disappointment had led him. He remembered the hours of anguish he had suffered when he learned that the lovely German girl, whose goodness and purity might have made another man of him, had chosen one of his companions, — a

man he despised, as only such natures can despise the victims on whom they depend for the means to gratify their own desires. He recalled the triumphant tone with which Tolofski had announced his engagement to Miss Leider. Then the evil look which had frightened Illyne came into the Prince's face, as he traced step by step the process of his deliberate revenge. At last his eyes closed, and the cigar, long since cold, fell unheeded from his relaxed fingers. The room was still empty, and save for the ticking of a clock in the corner, perfect silence reigned. The Prince turned his head and groaned in his sleep.

Balzac's sturdy villain laughs at conscience and remorse, and says no sin is punished which is not found out. This was Turgeoff's theory, but he had failed to take the body into the account. Conscience awakens when the nerves weaken. At fifty, after a life of self-indulgence, the Prince remembered his past, and saw images. The matter-of-fact, self-contained man suddenly finds that he has an imagination and a memory, and that they are getting the upper hand of the

power behind them. There is no resort but further excitement; yet this reacts again upon the will, — the strained nerves break, and the man's career is ended. To this point the Prince is coming. Already he is haunted, sleeping or waking, with the images which will soon overpower his judgment and land him in his self-made hell.

Now, as he sleeps uneasily, he sees a quiet room with a certain pale-faced young man leaning forward eagerly, to watch the turn of the decisive card. There is perfect silence as it falls, and all eyes turn on the young man when it is seen that he has lost. He takes a pencil and paper from his pocket as if to write, hesitates a moment, then deliberately puts them back, and walks with a set look in his face to where the Prince sits handling the cards. Leaning forward, he says in a low clear tone, "Your play was dishonest. I claim that the cards were fixed." Then comes a picture of a secluded spot near a lovely wood, with the sun rising glorious over the tree-tops. How green the grass is, and how

the birds sing! At a signal, two men turn and fire, and one, throwing out his hands wildly, falls backward on the turf. The Prince sees him lying with arms flung wide apart, and white face upturned to the blue sky, — a handsome face, but with a bluish-black hole just in the middle of the high forehead, and one narrow red stain passing from it half-way down the cheek.

The Prince woke suddenly, and springing to his feet gazed in a startled way about the room, then sinking into his chair again, rang the bell and ordered a glass of brandy and water.

"Bah! what's the matter with me?" he said to himself. "It could n't have been helped, and was as fair a duel as ever was fought. That girl has upset me."

As he placed the empty glass on the table at his side, Count Sevasti entered at the opposite door, and seeing the Prince, at once crossed the room and sat down.

"Where have you been, Turgeoff?" he asked, "I expected to see you at the Gordons', paying

your usual polite attentions to Miss Tolofski. As it was, the American, Munroe, quite monopolized her."

"Miss Tolofski does n't receive my devotion thus far with the favor I could wish," answered Turgeoff, lazily; "but I 'm not discouraged. I think I shall secure her interest later on."

"Don't wait too long. Our friend Munroe is good-looking, rich, and, if he is in earnest, dangerous."

"I can afford to wait," answered Turgeoff, shortly. "Everybody there, I suppose?"

"Yes; and by the way Mrs. Harding asked me a curious question. She said as we were passing the Tolofski girl, 'Do you think Prince Turgeoff knows her people, or could tell me anything about them?' What do you suppose she was driving at?"

"I don't know, I 'm sure; but it 's likely she thinks this girl has taken a desirable *parti* from her daughter; and if that 's so, she probably wants some fact to bowl her over with."

"That's reasonable enough. Well, can you help her? I think you told me you knew the young woman's father?"

A curious expression crossed Turgeoff's face as the Count said this. His mind flew back instantly to the scene he had just dismissed, and he saw again the white upturned face with its staring eyes; but he rose and stood facing his friend, and answered coolly: "Yes, I knew him; indeed, I was with him when he died. And now shall we play for an hour? I'm tired of doing nothing."

Illyne's father was the spoiled child of rich parents. Indulged in his youth until selfish indulgence was his only idea of happiness, he grew up into a passionate unbridled manhood, living for pleasure, and rapidly drying up its sources. Full of good impulses and intentions, he lacked the will to carry them out, and so drifted finally into the excesses which ruined him. To this result Turgeoff contributed all in his power. He was Tolofski's most intimate friend, and led him where he would, as a strong calculating man can always lead one who acts

on impulse, and whose friendships and enmities are alike vehement.

It was while they were living together in Paris that they met Illyne's mother. She was there spending the winter in the pursuit of some art studies. The simple purity of her character had attracted them both, and both had used every effort to win her affections. Each man had acted according to his nature, — Turgeoff making his advances slowly, but with the skill and tact of a man of the world, while Tolofski rushed forward to victory with that unthinking ardor which is generally so irresistible when joined to a generous nature and a handsome person. For the time being he gave up every other object, dropped his old companions, and when with pale face and his fine eyes looking unutterable love, he finally threw himself at Miss Leider's feet, she found that her heart had been swept away by the whirlwind of his passion, and she willingly agreed to become his wife.

Turgeoff had apparently accepted his defeat quietly; but he had set his whole heart on suc-

cess, and unaccustomed to be thwarted, a bitter hatred of them both filled his heart and led him into a villanous plan for revenge. There were several results consequent upon this. One of them was the ultimate ruin and death of Tolofski, whose love of excitement made it impossible that he should long be held down by a domestic life. Fortunately for his children, before the bonds of love had begun to chafe, he had settled an amount of money on their mother which was an ample provision for the future; but the very fact that he had done this made him all the more reckless with the rest of his fortune, and at the time of the duel he was not only penniless, but heavily in debt. He had been for some time practically separated from his family, and when he was shot was actually on the way to them, having made up his mind to ask for the return of part of the money he had left for their support.

What now troubled and haunted Turgeoff was not the duel itself, which had as he thought been forced on him, but the remembrance of what had gone before, — of his treachery to

his friend, and the cold-blooded patience with which he had led him away from possible reformation into all kinds of temptation and vice. The Prince knew well enough that when this poor wrecked soul stood up, with nerves unstrung by dissipation, reckless in the knowledge that he had nothing more to lose, and faced a steady hand and eye, that murder was committed.

It is possible that most of us have sometime in our lives been guilty of an act which we have confessed before the bar of our conscience to be inexcusable. With the world about us absorbed and forgetful, we have probably found leisure to sew up this rent in the garment of our virtue, or at any rate have been able in the whirl of our own lives to smother an inconvenient sense of right and wrong, to talk glibly in stock phrase on the uselessness and foolishness of the old-fashioned Puritan conscience, and at last sincerely to thank God that we are not as other men. Yet perhaps each of us will secretly confess that there are times when some association brings back the memory of our past sin strongly

enough to make remorse return and take possession of the swept and garnished chambers of the heart, and render our last state worse than our first.

This is the cheerful preliminary to the permanent future state of the wicked, and Prince Turgeoff was beginning to enter into his reward. The waking up was due to his sudden and unexpected meeting with the daughter of the man whom he had shot years before. Try as he would to prevent it, his mind reverted to the past, and was filled with superstitious dread of the future. The deeper he plunged into the excitement of gambling and dissipation, the more constant was the pressure of his tormentors; and yet he could not bring himself to go elsewhere. Through Illyne's sad eyes the spirit of her dead mother looked reproachfully, holding him with a strange fascination, yet rousing him into fresh hatred and a resolve to use his power to crush the unconscious instrument of his punishment. The question was how to do this in the most effectual way; and to decide this he made every effort to win Illyne's

confidence, making himself as agreeable as he could, and using the tact and skill which had so often served him in winning the regard of the fair sex. His lack of progress at first annoyed and then enraged him. Every attempt at an advance on his part was met by a quiet but effectual resistance on hers, for which he was at a loss to account.

The truth was, Illyne had a habit of dividing mankind into two parts, — the good and the bad, and instinct had helped her to put Turgeoff where he belonged. Indeed, in the artificial society into which she was suddenly plunged, experience played but a small part in influencing either her judgments or actions. This being so, she was sure to make mistakes and be misunderstood; but as a rule she was happily ignorant that she offended against custom, and went on in her own path undisturbed. Experience is a necessary and cruel teacher for most of us, but we have all probably seen those, especially women, who walked with firm unhesitating tread through the dangers and by the pit-falls of life, from whom the mists seemed

to roll away, and to whom the path was made plain, in the strong light of a sweet purity of heart and mind which shone from their eyes and added grace to their steps. What wonder that the worldly wisdom of Prince Turgeoff had failed to make an impression on such a character, or that it puzzled Mrs. Harding!

Illyne's mother was a well-born, refined woman, who had withdrawn from society, but desired her children to be well fitted for contact with it. They had both been given everything which money could command in the way of instruction and travel. For years an invalid, she had depended wholly on her daughter's care and management for her comfort. And Illyne had given herself up willingly, for she was passionately fond of the sweet mother whose face, with its sad, dreamy eyes and delicate features, dwelt now in her memory as that of a saint. Indeed, if a pure life and devotion to duty through many years of trial, disappointment, and suffering make a saint, she was one.

After her death, Illyne had lived for a long

time in complete seclusion; but finally her friends had persuaded her to face the world and seek the distractions of travel.

The Baroness Kaldenberg had known and loved her mother, and with her Illyne had been content to leave Germany and her former quiet life. Now she saw and heard much from which she shrank, and which made her doubt sometimes if she had been wise to venture among people who seemed so selfish in their lives, and so cruel and cold in their judgments. However, she knew they were not all so. There was Leslie Harding, who had been so sweet and good that she almost felt like loving her; and there was young Mr. Fred, as she had learned to call him, who had assumed a kind of protectorate over her, and who was so jolly and boyish and natural, and withal so good-looking, with his well-built figure, frank, open, smooth face, and shrewd, twinkling blue eyes. She never laughed so much with any one else, nor felt so wholly unreserved and girlish, — quite as she used to feel years ago with her brother Serge, when

they rambled off together, and talked about everything in the heavens above and the earth beneath. These two she called her friends. Then there was Mr. Munroe. She did not know quite where to place him. Sometimes he seemed so earnest and good, and talked so well, that he aroused her sympathy and admiration; but again, he assumed a cynical or bitter tone which she detested, and which made her doubt if she ever cared to see him again.

It astonished her when she thought of it, how much she did see of him, and how he too seemed to assume the right of looking after her. Well, he was a friend of her brother, and privileged on that account. Several times she had determined to see less of him, but he seemed always to be about, and it was difficult to manage in the same house. Difficult, indeed, with a young man laboring earnestly to make it impossible!

Turgeoff watched this growing intimacy with interest and approval. He saw in an attachment of this kind a possible lever and a strong

one with which he could control Illyne's future. "If she falls in love with the man," he thought, "she will do anything rather than have her supposed happiness destroyed." He therefore began at this time to avoid meeting Illyne, leaving the coast clear for Munroe, and biding his own opportunity.

CHAPTER XIII.

EVERY one who goes to Nice is expected to visit the flower-market, and Munroe, who at this time was inclined to wander alone, found himself one morning walking over the bridge toward the market square.

The entrance is through one of the narrow streets of the old town, and the gabble of the market women can be heard for quite a distance. Two rows of stalls occupy the full length of the square, on one of which are displayed all kinds of fruits and vegetables, and on the other, masses of flowers. The passageway between is filled with a motley crowd, most of them carrying baskets for their day's supply, and bargaining in shrill voices with the ugly old venders. Occasionally one sees a pretty traveller from some of the hotels, bearing back in her dainty hands a basketful of

blue violets and luxurious heliotrope, and escorted by the correct thing in morning flannels, with a red rose in its white coat.

The market women are fond of these well-dressed young men; they welcome them from year to year. Each season a different lot, but all with the same reckless disregard of the price of violets. The Anglo custom of flirtation is truly a blessed thing for horticulture.

As Munroe walked slowly down the long passage, the women looked at him expectantly and held out their tempting wares, offering them in that voluble mixture of French and Italian which forms their patois. He hesitated before one of the stalls, then picked up a bunch of early roses and looked at them thoughtfully.

"Ten francs! And they will turn her heart to you," cried the ancient flower-girl.

But Munroe was not thinking of the price. He held the blossoms an instant, then laid them down and walked away without a word.

"You may have them for five francs," shouted the woman; but Munroe paid no attention.

After a little he turned to the right and ascended some steps which lead to the top of the long row of low houses that bound this side of the square, the roofs of which form a public promenade. From this elevation there is a view of the whole market on one side, and of the sea on the other.

Munroe paused, and looking down enjoyed in a vague way the shifting colors and movement. Presently two persons stopped directly behind him. They had also come up from the market, and now stood looking out over the sea. Munroe turned a little, and caught a glimpse of the jewelled hair-pin and yellow locks of Miss Mabel Gordon. With her was Fred, carrying a big basket of flowers.

"But they are *all* yours," said Miss Gordon, with downcast eyes.

"You know I bought them for you," answered Fred, eagerly, "and all I want back is the one in your dress."

A little hand, clothed in a many-buttoned tan-colored glove, played coyly with a red rose, and finally pulled it gently and reluctantly out

from its sweet resting-place, and extended it timidly toward the expectant youth.

All this Munroe heard and saw before he realized that he was eavesdropping; then he faced about and stepped toward the absorbed couple. Fred seized his prize with a quick motion, and seeing Munroe's smiling face, hid the flower in his hand, and blushed violently.

Miss Mabel was not disturbed. Her dark eyes were wide open and alert. The gloved hand went to the basket and pulled out some buds which she carefully pinned in her bosom. "You quite startled me," she said quietly to Munroe; but beyond a slight contraction of the pupils of her eyes, caused by the effort to suppress a laugh, there was no change in her face.

After a few words they all walked on a little together, and then stopped to look down into the market. Fred was silent, and wished he could throw Munroe off the roof. A walk alone with Miss Gordon was a rare and sweet privilege. He could not understand how she could smile and chat so cheerfully with another man.

Munroe looked, and was amused. He had just resisted the temptation to buy some roses, and here at his hand was an illustration of the effects of yielding to such sentimentality. He smiled complacently, and his naturally Pharisaical nature expanded till he felt himself quite on a height of superior wisdom. Presently, however, he came down, shot by an arrow between the joints of his armor; but ignorant whether skill or chance had directed the bolt.

"Do you know," said Miss Mabel, "I'm awfully glad to see you. I've been wanting ever so long to ask you about Miss Tolofski. Mamma says she is an actress, or something; but she seems so intimate with Leslie Harding that I can't believe it; and yet she *is* peculiar. Her manner is so tragic; don't you think so?"

"Whose? Miss Harding's?"

"No, of course not! How absurd! Miss Tolofski's; and she is quite snubby. Fancy her getting up the other day and sailing out of the room just because I said — but I forgot. It was about you — how funny! Now you won't be annoyed, will you?"

"Certainly not," said Munroe, stiffly.

"Well, the fact is I was talking of you to Mr. Manning, and I said I thought you were an awful flirt. Do you know, I was actually scared. She positively stalked out of the room!"

Then Miss Gordon laughed merrily, and turned her eyes with a most innocent look full on Munroe's face, from which the expression of amusement had already fled. This calm assumption of familiarity by a girl whom he scarcely knew, and thoroughly disliked, was not soothing.

Just then Fred made an exclamation, and drew their attention to a figure standing in front of a flower-stall. It was Miss Tolofski. She had a basket in her hand, into which she was looking as if in doubt as to what she should next add to its treasures. Her costume was of some dark material, but she wore a broad-brimmed white hat, trimmed with a black ostrich plume, which swept back in a graceful curve and mingled its feathery tips with her hair.

"How funny!" said Miss Gordon, soberly. It was a favorite exclamation of hers, and did not always sound appropriate. Turning to Fred she asked, "Shall we join her?"

"If you like," answered he, morosely.

She hesitated a second, and then said, "I think on the whole I'd rather walk on. Will you join us, Mr. Munroe?"

That gentleman glanced quickly at her as she gave this polite invitation. He saw no trace of consciousness, — that was a relief; but somehow his sense of superiority seemed to have left him.

Probably his face showed some embarrassment, for Miss Gordon went on as if he had answered. "No?" She said, "I'm so sorry! Come, Mr. Manning, shall *we* start?"

After they had gone a little way she broke into a hearty laugh. "Wasn't it just too rich?" she exclaimed.

"Wasn't what?" asked Fred. "I didn't see anything to laugh at."

"Oh, dear!" sighed she. "Men are *so* stupid!"

Munroe from his place glanced uneasily after the two retreating figures, and quickly back to Miss Tolofski. Then he turned toward the stairs, muttering, "Confound that girl's chatter!"

Presently Illyne saw him as he crossed toward her, and her face brightened as she nodded a greeting.

"So you know this attractive place, too?" he asked.

"Oh, yes," she replied; "I often come here. I love the flowers," and holding up a delicate pink rose she said, speaking almost to herself, "How bright a thing it is! Ah, it is happy, because it fills its mission, and is let to die." Then, as if remembering where she was, "Do you come here often? I have not seen you before; but generally I am here much earlier."

"No," answered he; "this is my first visit. And now where do you go? May I walk with you, and carry the basket? We can reach the promenade through this arch, and go back by the sea, if you like."

There was scarcely any one out at this hour, and they stood together enjoying the beauty of a bright scene. The Bay stretched its vast curve far away to the right, bordered, as far as the eye could reach, with the white line of its broad promenade, and back of that the glaring fronts of its numerous hotels. The mild, tideless water of the Mediterranean lapped the stones at their feet, where on the beach some huge fishing-boats lay with their tarred sides glistening in the sun. Close on the left rose "the Château," its perpendicular cliffs springing boldly out of the water. About half way up its side, on a projecting rock, the gray walls of an ancient round tower stood boldly out, and far above that, at the very top, they saw the foam of the waterfall which pours its artificial torrent over the cliff to a rocky bed below, and is carried in swift winding course down the mountain to the sea.

"What do you say," Munroe asked, "to walking to the top of the Château? We can do it before lunch-time."

Illyne hesitated a little, and then said frankly,

"If you have the time I should like it very much. I am happy to walk, and at first used to go alone, very far away. But once I lost myself, and was late, and the Baroness then said it was not proper for a young lady to walk alone, here; and since then I have not been."

It occurred to Munroe that perhaps the Baroness might not consider that the escort of a young man improved matters much; but this idea was not for him to suggest, and they started to wend their way around the base of the hill, to the "old harbor," from which point the road winds in easy curves to the top of the Château, making an exhilarating and not difficult climb.

As they were passing around the sharp curve at the foot of the hill, an open carriage drove rapidly around the corner and passed them. One of the gentlemen in it, whom Munroe recognized as Prince Turgeoff, lifted his hat, and then said a few words rapidly to his companion, who turned and looked eagerly back.

"Do you know the man who was with Turgeoff?" asked Munroe.

"I think not; but I only caught a glimpse of him. He looked like a priest, did he not?"

"Rather that type of a face, I thought; but he is n't a priest."

"Do you know him, then?"

"No; but Turgeoff does n't consort much with that profession, I fancy. It must be a curious kind of a priest, who is *his* friend."

"You do not like Prince Turgeoff?"

"No; do you?"

Munroe asked this question carelessly, and was looking at Illyne as he did so. The vehemence of her reply almost frightened him. She seemed to forget where she was, for she stopped in the road, and stamped her foot violently.

"I detest the man!" she said; and then added, as she moved on, "I fear him, too; and yet I know not why I feel about him at all."

After this outbreak she avoided the subject, and when Munroe tried to pursue it, turned appealingly to him, and begged that he would say no more.

"I know I am a strange girl," she said sadly, "and that you do not understand me; but it

is n't my fault. My life cannot be like that of other girls, whom you see so bright and happy. Sometime I suppose I shall tell you — if I can; but not yet — do not ask me."

Then she turned her head away quickly, and Munroe thought it was because she wished to hide some tears; so he stared straight ahead, and they climbed the rest of the way in silence, both busy with their thoughts.

Hers seemed sad enough; but there was growing in his heart a deeper interest than he had known, a strong desire to guard this girl against harm, and a determination to find out sometime what troubled her.

Arriving at the summit, they sat down on a stone bench, and, still silent, looked off at the glorious prospect. Just beneath lay the "old town," with its picturesque, narrow streets and tall houses; beyond that the long stretch of the "stranger's quarter," lining the Bay. To the right, in the distance, the snow-capped mountains of the Maritime Alps, with a foreground of round-topped, olive-crowned hills, dotted here and there with the white walls of their châteaux.

At the left, the sparkling sea, the sun glancing merrily from its little waves and carrying the eye along, till far away on the horizon, looking like the faint outline of a cloud, they saw the island where the great Napoleon walked and mused.

Illyne sat quietly, with her hands folded in her lap, and her brown eyes looking far into a distance which contained neither Munroe nor Nice, nor any present thing.

At last he ventured to recall her by saying, "It is very beautiful, is n't it?"

"Yes," she answered dreamily, as consciousness of her surroundings came slowly back, "yes, very beautiful. It is thus that I enjoy life. No one can take it from me, the beauty of God's earth. The meanest of His creatures can so worship Him."

"But, Miss Tolofski, why are you so sad about it? Surely the world is full of enjoyment outside this lovely scene, is n't it?"

"Yes — perhaps — I think so — to you, yes surely. But — but now I think we should go back again; already it is nearly luncheon-time,

and the Baroness will wonder if again I am lost."

And rising, with a quick change of tone and expression, and a slight toss of the head, as if to throw off her sombre thoughts, Illyne led the way down the hill, and walking rapidly, they reached the hotel just as the guests were going in to *table d'hôte.*

As they crossed the hall, Mrs. Gordon and her daughter met them, and the latter stopped and gushed sweetly about the beauties of a morning walk. Then she asked Munroe what he had in his basket. Whereupon Miss Tolofski claimed it, and opening the cover, showed her the flowers.

"Oh! but they are all wilted," said Miss Mabel.

"Yes," replied Illyne, simply, "I 'm afraid I forgot about them."

"How funny!" said Miss Gordon, and looked at Munroe; but he had turned away.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE gentleman whom Munroe and Miss Tolofski had seen riding with Turgeoff was a new arrival, but soon came to be well known in society circles. He had a round, smooth-shaven face, close-cut black hair, heavy brows, large features, and beady eyes. He dressed in a semi-clerical way, and looked like a priest. His manners were suave and quiet, and when he smiled and showed his strong regular teeth, his face was rather attractive than otherwise. He was evidently a man of large experience and quick intelligence, and coming properly introduced by Prince Turgeoff, answered all the requirements of the ever varying and somewhat mixed society of a great watering place. Years before, he had been attached to Prince Turgeoff as a valet. His quickness and scrupulous dishonesty had soon won his em-

ployer's confidence, and he became a general utility man for that gentleman during the days of his greatest prosperity. In times of hard luck he disappeared, but if the Prince had been fortunate in his ventures, Pietroff was generally on hand. Being of an economical and prudent disposition, and never having acquired what are known as gentlemen's vices, he had accumulated funds, and was thus now able to take that position in society which his birth had denied, but for which his talents eminently fitted him. Like nearly all Russians he spoke several languages fluently, and possessed what so many of them also have, — a radically cynical nature, great natural intelligence and tact, and a large capacity for skilful lying. It is doubtful if he ever knew what his proper name was. Born without the right to any, he had adopted different ones from time to time, as they suited his purposes.

The Prince was not a proud man, the hard necessities of life having made him a practical democrat; therefore he did not shrink from an appearance of social equality with his former

servant whenever they were where Pietroff's early history was unknown, nor did he refuse a loan of money from him whenever that article became scarce. On the other hand, Pietroff, while he felt under social obligations to the Prince, was not inclined to take introductions to the "best people" as an equivalent for cash. Willingness to do this rarely comes till the second generation. His security for loans to his late master consisted in his thorough knowledge of that gentleman's past.

It took Pietroff some time to find out exactly for what he had been summoned to Nice. When Turgeoff did finally speak, the ex-valet found it difficult to understand why he wished to injure Miss Tolofski. Indeed, the vindictive feeling which the Prince had formerly displayed toward her family had always puzzled him, for he never understood its motive. Even had he known that Illyne's mother had refused the Prince, he would have considered it but a slight incident in a life full of adventures. He was utterly unable to comprehend a feeling of the kind Miss Leider had aroused in Turgeoff's

heart so long ago; nor could he realize that the sudden desire for revenge which its forcible suppression had brought on was the sole motive which actuated the Prince in what he did at that time, or that Illyne's unexpected appearance could rouse afresh those long-buried passions, and render him almost a monomaniac.

Finally, one evening Pietroff spoke out plainly. He said, "See here, Turgeoff; I don't know what you want of me; but one thing I do see, and that is that you have got Tolofski's girl on your mind. Well, if it's about her, I tell you plainly I won't act. I've done enough already."

"But you helped me before," replied the Prince.

"I know I did, and I say that was enough. I never liked it, and you got nothing. Why don't you talk plainly? What do you expect to get now?"

"Nothing."

"Very well, then I'm done; and I think you'd better stop drinking for a while, and get your head cleared."

Turgeoff sat silent for a moment, with his eyes half closed, and an unpleasant look on his face. Then he said, "So you think you've come here for nothing, do you?"

"It seems so."

"When shall you leave?"

"I didn't say I should leave. I like it here. I've been out of society for some time, and I enjoy it. The ladies are charming. Your friend Mrs. Gordon, by the way, is she respectable?"

"Yes."

"Rich?"

"Yes."

"And her daughter, has she money?"

"I suppose she will have. What are you driving at?"

Pietroff leaned back in his chair and put both hands behind his head. "I'm getting tired of a loose life," he said; "why should n't I marry?"

"It's just what I want you to do," replied Turgeoff, quickly; "but I want you to marry Illyne Tolofski. She has her mother's fortune."

"So, that's your game! Well, it won't work. She hates you and suspects me."

"That makes no difference. You know the man with whom we saw her the first day you came?"

"The American? Yes."

"Well, she is in love with him."

"That makes it the harder to manage."

"Bah! how old are you? Suppose we tell them both all we know. Of course he breaks off the affair at once, leaving her in the lurch and desperate. Then you come in as disinterested lover, and catch her on the rebound; show her that the world is cruel and cold, and that in you alone can she find a protector and friend capable of managing all her affairs. Then lay your heart, your name, your rank, and your wealth at her feet."

Pietroff grinned.

"Why, man," continued the Prince, "it's the easiest game you ever had to play. She is as innocent as a child."

"And what do you expect to get out of it?"

"As I said before, nothing!"

Pietroff rose from his chair and paced up and down the room once or twice, rubbing his chin gently with his hand, then he said, —

"Turgeoff, you 're a damned heartless villain, and I believe a liar. How much money has she got?"

The Prince started at the beginning of this sentence, but at its conclusion settled quietly back in his chair. "About two hundred thousand francs, I believe," he answered quietly.

Again Pietroff paced the floor meditating. "It 's a good deal of money," he said finally, "and I 'll see what I can do; but mind you, I expect to fail. The girl may be innocent, but for all that she will slip through our fingers."

"Then she 's made of different stuff from anything you ever got hold of before," said Turgeoff, with a smile.

"I think she is," answered Pietroff, quietly.

After this, Illyne was rarely troubled by Prince Turgeoff; he seemed to have forgotten her. But Munroe, who was now old enough in love to "take notice," saw that Pietroff neglected no opportunity to pay her

unobtrusive attention; and knowing that the man was Turgeoff's particular friend, he became suspicious and watchful. He found, however, that Pietroff was a great deal with the Gordons, and finally made up his mind that if that gentleman was after any one, it was Miss Mabel.

Now, Munroe disliked Miss Gordon very much, and believing as he did that Pietroff was an adventurer, he was not sorry to see her in danger of being bitten. He said to himself that this feeling on his part was owing to the evident pains she was taking to captivate Fred Manning, and the apparent rapid success she was having in that direction; but the truth was, that Miss Gordon was a very wide-awake girl. She saw Munroe's aversion to her, and resented what she called his airs. She therefore used every opportunity to shock and annoy him. So long as he had remained seated on his little pinnacle of indifference to the other sex he was out of the reach of attack, and could amuse himself by watching the curious development of youthful passion in others. We are all apt to consider our own particular case

secure from observation, and resent any reference to it as an impertinence; but as we grow older we learn that it is impossible to go into a crowd without being jostled.

After Munroe's walk with Miss Tolofski he became interested in botany, and went every morning to the market for specimens. The third day he was fortunate enough to meet Illyne on her way back.

"Why," said she, "I thought you were never up so early!"

"I've reformed," he answered, "and rise every day with the sun. But it does me no good without a walk; can't we repeat our experiment of the other day?"

"No," she replied, "it is impossible, much as I like the walking. I have learned that I was wicked to go even once, — very, very wicked. I think it stupid of people to talk so, but I can go no more."

"Who did, — who talked?" he asked in an indignant tone.

"Oh, every one, I think," she answered smiling. "I am learning that here I cannot do as

at my home in Germany;" and seeing him about to protest, she added, "Indeed, I think you would not have asked me had you known it was bad for me to go!"

This was a home-thrust, and closed the discussion; but Munroe had no idea of giving up. He made no reply, but walked on by her side, digging the end of his stick viciously into the pavement.

"I'm afraid you will break your cane," she said, without looking at him.

Munroe gave a final dig, and put the stick under his arm. His face cleared as he did so, for a new plan had come into his mind.

"You told me you were going to take riding lessons; have you begun?" he asked.

"Yes, three days ago I began, and get on famously."

"At what hour do you ride?"

"Oh, very early, before any one else; at eight o'clock."

"It is nearly that now. Do you think it would be proper if I should go too? I need the exercise."

"I cannot tell," she answered with a bright look. "I think I would rather you did not, at any rate, not to-day; but surely the *manége* is open to every one. I cannot help it if you come."

"That's not what I call a cordial permission," he said; "but I'm coming to-morrow, all the same."

"Very well. But I do not promise to speak much to you; I am very attentive to my lessons. Now I go in this shop, and will say *au revoir*."

As she sat waiting for her package, she had an uneasy feeling that she ought to have been very severe, and prevented his going. "But after all," she concluded, "it is n't like taking a walk; and the *manége* IS open to every one."

As she was going upstairs in the hotel, she met Fred coming down, and an idea came to her.

"Oh, Mr. Fred!" she began.

"I say," interrupted he, "don't you think it's rather ridiculous, calling me Mr. Fred?"

"Perhaps it is," she answered demurely; "in future it shall be Mr. Manning."

"Now, you know that's not what I meant. Why not *Fred?* It's much simpler."

"Very well," laughed she, "*Fred* it shall be. But what will Miss Gordon say?"

"Now, see here, don't you begin that too. Leslie's bad enough."

"And does your cousin plague you?"

"No, but she thinks she does; and besides, she does n't dare to say much, considering — by the way, has Leslie ever told you anything about her affairs?"

"Why, no! Has she, then, what you call 'affairs'?"

"Oh," said Fred, carelessly, "I suppose every girl has; but I guess she is my kind, and does n't talk."

"At any rate, she would not naturally confide in me, who have known her so short a time; but I must not stand here talking to you. I wish only to ask a favor. Do you know how to ride?"

"Yes, a little; why?"

"I wish you to go with me every morning to the *manége.* I want company, and it will do you good."

"Well," said Fred, reflectively, "you know I'm rather busy;" then seeing Illyne smile he blushed, and asked what time she went, and finding that the hour would not interfere with any of his plans of devotion to business, he promised to be on hand the next morning.

"You are a good boy," said Illyne, and went on to her room with a relieved mind.

Meantime Munroe decided that equestrian exercise was more profitable than the pursuit of botany, and finding some riding-clothes and an old horn-handled whip in his trunk, equipped himself, and made his way the following morning to the *manége*. Miss Tolofski was already in the saddle, walking her horse soberly around the ring, and by her side, watching her hands and seat with a critical eye, was Fred. He returned Munroe's somewhat astonished look by a familiar nod, as if it was a matter of course that he should appear at this hour, but turned to his companion, and said in a low voice, "You deceitful thing!"

She paid no attention to this impertinence, for the master called out, "Now, Mademoiselle,

trot, if you please. So — one, two, three; one, two, three. Very good. I shall soon give you quite another horse. You sit well, and have no fear. Once again, now. Very good indeed!"

Thus Illyne satisfied her conscience and made herself unhappy, till one morning when, for some reason, Fred did not appear.

Munroe found her mounted on a restive and apparently vicious animal, who was doing his best to unseat her. Absorbed in the brute's management Munroe's entrance was not noticed, and he was able to admire an exhibition of that determination and pluck which her face had led him to believe she possessed. She was dressed in the usual close-fitting English riding-habit, so becoming to slender, well-formed women, and her abundant black hair was tightly coiled well up on her head, and covered with a small round hat, made apparently of white feathers. Her lips were tightly compressed and her eye was flashing as she sat leaning slightly forward, with every nerve braced, and on either cheek a round spot of bright color.

It was a pretty picture, and Munroe paused to admire it before calling for his own horse.

The manager, an ignorant Frenchman, was apparently enjoying the scene also, for he stood, whip in hand, and legs wide apart, in the centre of the tan-bark ring, and smiled as the horse gave one furious lunge after another, in vain endeavor to unseat his rider. Suddenly, just as Munroe entered, the animal reared, fell partly sidewise, and Miss Tolofski was caught between his side and the wall as he came down. Both men rushed forward, the riding-master to the horse, and Munroe to Miss Tolofski. She had come down on her feet, and stood white as a sheet, but with the same determined look in her eyes.

"Bring him up, I will mount again," she said to the man.

"But you are hurt," interposed Munroe, hotly. "That is not a fit horse, and you are not to mount again."

For a moment the color surged back into Illyne's cheeks as she heard this tone, and realized that a command had been put upon

her. She looked Munroe squarely in the eyes an instant, and then turned her head proudly away.

"I think you take too much on yourself," she said quietly. "I am not used to give up."

"I beg your pardon," answered he, "I do indeed. I only meant to advise. Please do not try again, just yet. You must be badly bruised."

Illyne's hand went to her side, and the color flickered in her cheek. The pleading tone of Munroe's voice startled her quite as much as his command had done. Suddenly she turned pale, and caught her breath quickly.

"Perhaps you are right," she said, "and I think I am hurt a little."

Then she attempted to walk, but would have fallen had not Munroe supported her to a chair in the dressing-room.

After a while she came out looking quite pale and limping a little, and he helped her to a cab, which he had gone out to get. As she seated herself, she turned and said, —

"You are very kind to me. I am quite unused to such care, and — and I think I should not accept it."

"May I ask" — began Munroe, but apparently she did not hear, for she leaned forward and gave her order to the driver quickly, and was whirled away, leaving Munroe standing in the road with a puzzled feeling that something serious had happened to him. Roused by the snap of an approaching cabman's whip he turned his face homeward, saying to himself, "Perhaps, after all, I 'd better go on to Rome."

CHAPTER XV.

DURING the long days of enforced confinement which succeeded Illyne's experience at the *manége*, she had ample time to pass in review all that had happened during the previous weeks.

One thing became plain to her, and she acknowledged it with all honesty, but with mingled feelings of pain and pleasure, — and that was that wherever her thoughts started, or whichever way they wandered, before long they were dwelling on the image of a tall, aristocratic-looking young man, recalling the tones of his voice, trying to understand his moods, and repeating over and over the many things he had said, which called from her heart a responsive thrill, making her sure that beneath the surface were all the qualities which her

maiden fancy had longed to find in the man she was to love.

To such a man she was ready to surrender, for he could lift her mind and heart into higher realms of thought and feeling. In all things he satisfied her; and if ever he should learn to love her — oh, ecstatic thought! — how gladly and peacefully she would rest in that love, and how she would strive to be worthy of it, and to keep it! And if this pure girl sometimes let her imagination run still further, and closing her eyes in delicious reverie, thought out the words he would speak and what she should answer; and finally, after the "Yes" was whispered, of the long embrace and sweet first kiss, — if she dreamed of all this, we, who are long since past the thrill of love, will not grudge her that transient pleasure just because we have learned how fleeting it is.

Munroe did not go to Rome, — how could he, until Miss Tolofski was so far recovered as to be out again! And since she was confined to her room, it seemed mere ordinary civility to send her some flowers. Sentimental gifts are

one thing; but when a person is ill, a basket of fresh blossoms is a reminder of out-door sunshine. They are medicine, and the donor a missionary. In such a case flowers ought to be sent, and therefore Munroe sent them. Nor did it even strike him as peculiar that he found it necessary to enter into all this argument about it.

Thus it happened that one day Illyne sat in her room with a pleased smile on her face, gazing at a lovely basket of roses that stood on the table, and inhaling the perfume which the breeze from the open window wafted to her. In her hand she held a card on which was written, "The result of an early and lonely walk to the flower-market."

"I believe," she thought, "that he would like me to have been with him;" but almost at once her face fell, and she thought, "I have no right to accept these attentions. He does n't know my story. If he did, would he still be my friend, or care if I hurt myself?"

She arose and limped to the window, taking a rose from the basket on her way, and stand-

ing in the sunshine, looked dreamily out over the trees of the Public Garden onto the placid ocean beyond. After a while a quiet look of determination came into her face, which meant, "Come what may, I will be candid and truthful;" and then she nestled the rose against her cheek, caressing it with soft touch, and murmuring tender German phrases of endearment, till at last the contented smile came back again; and Leslie Harding coming in at that moment, exclaimed, —

"What lovely flowers! And you, how pretty you look! And you are blushing, — positively you are!"

"I'm not! indeed, I'm not! and I think it most impertinent to ask questions."

"But I didn't; I haven't asked a question. There's no need of it."

Then she rushed impulsively up to Illyne, and took her burning cheeks between her hands and kissed her violently.

"You silly thing!" she said; "can't you see that I know your secret? Don't you know that I love you? And haven't you seen from the

way I've been sneaking in here twenty times a day since you've been ill, that I'm dying to tell you something too?"

"But, my dear, there is nothing — I — I — truly, I know not what you would say!"

"Oh, you hypocrite! What's that in your hand? Poor rose! see how you have crushed it! Now, don't throw it away, — give it to me. No? Do you wish for it? My dear, I saw them all before you did; and he as much as told me that he loved you to distraction, and —"

"Oh, Leslie! how can you?"

"Indeed, it's true; and, my dear, I nearly embraced him. If Mamma had seen me, she would have simply fainted. I couldn't have acted so to save me, six months ago; but I'm a changed girl since — since —"

"Since what, Leslie?" asked Illyne, her eyes growing large with wonder at the girl's excitement.

"Since I've been in love myself."

At this, Illyne fell back into her chair in a dazed condition. "Leslie, my dear," she finally

managed to say, "I think you've taken leave of your senses. Never have I heard you go on so; and yet your cousin did say—"

"Has Fred *dared* to tell you anything?" interrupted Leslie, jumping up.

"No, he told me nothing. He is a cautious boy, that."

"If he had, I would have killed him. But I shall — I can't stand it! He can't object to his own sister—"

"What *are* you saying, Leslie? Really, I think my head is going. Whose sister? and what is there to tell?"

Thereupon Leslie, adopting a mysterious manner and a stage walk, passed from left to right and back, examining all the doors and windows, and finally drew a chair close to Illyne's, and said in a hoarse whisper, —

"I've heard from him, and he's coming!"

"Dear Leslie!" exclaimed Illyne, "please, what is it? I am getting nervous, truly I am; for you are quite unlike yourself, and your eyes shine so."

"Do they? do they? I'm so glad!" ex-

claimed Leslie; and springing to her feet she executed a series of astonishing pirouettes, stopping finally with flushed cheeks just in front of Illyne.

"It's because I'm so happy," she cried; "I've kept it down so long, and walked demurely and properly about doing those things which I ought to do. Oh, you don't know what it is to be kept eternally in harness, — and some time I might have come to like it, as some people do, and see nothing beyond the proper observance of every proper form. But it's the outside of the platter; and yet I know I was growing into it till he came. Oh, Illyne!" — and now she dropped on her knees by Illyne's side — "he is so true and natural and strong, and I do love him so! God bless you, my dear, for — for having a brother!"

After which somewhat whimsical ending to her long speech, this excited girl buried her face in Illyne's lap, and with the feeling that her long probation was nearly ended, and that in his sister she was sure of that loving and hearty sympathy which she had so sorely

missed, she showed the excess of her joy by bursting into tears.

When Illyne at last realized from all this disconnected talk that it was her brother Serge whom Leslie loved, the suddenness of the news nearly made her faint. She sat so still that Leslie at last looked up with a smile in the midst of her tears, to see what it meant.

Illyne was sitting very erect and pale, with a dazed look in her eyes, as if she had received a sudden blow. Poor Leslie! Was his own sister going to fail her too? She rose quickly, and stood in front of Illyne.

"I am sorry you don't approve," she said coldly. "I had hoped you would." Then she turned as if to leave the room.

Illyne sprang to her feet and flung her arms impetuously around her. "Leslie," she cried, "don't misunderstand me. I can't bear it, and I have so much to bear. It all came so suddenly, you know. I thought you scarcely knew each other; and — and — there is something you ought to know, but I cannot tell you. He does n't know it himself. What shall I do?"

"If there is anything I ought to know, you must tell me at once. Is he — is he engaged to another girl?"

"How could he be," answered Illyne with an hysterical laugh, "without knowing it himself? No, dear, I know how he must love you, for I love you too. But now I 'm not fit to talk; I 'm morbid and nervous, and filled with doubts. I have n't meant to deceive any one. God knows I 've meant to do right; but it's so hard, so hard, — and now for him too!"

Leslie was frightened by this vehemence. Illyne's lips were compressed, and her breast was heaving, and as she spoke she rapidly clasped and unclasped her hands.

"You don't know what all this means," she went on, "and I can't tell you — not yet: you must trust me. After I have seen my brother, he will tell you everything; and then perhaps happiness will come to us all, — and perhaps more misery; who can tell?"

Her head drooped and her hands relaxed, and Leslie saw her totter as she reached for her chair.

There was silence for a moment, and then Leslie's strong common-sense came to the rescue, and she walked back and said quietly, —

"I can't understand you, Illyne; but I would trust Serge with my life, and I trust you. Now you are overwrought, and not yourself. I ought not to have told you so suddenly." Then she stooped over, touched Illyne's hair with her lips, and turned and left the room.

And now to Leslie's feeling of loneliness was added an anxious foreboding, for his sister had said that there was something she ought to know. "Oh, dear," she moaned, as she went to her room, "have they all combined to make me unhappy? Why is it such hard work to get what we want? I wonder if money *is* everything." Then she stopped as she closed her door, and stamped her foot. "I don't care," she said aloud; "I love him and he loves me, and that's enough."

Illyne, left alone, sat for a long time silent and motionless; then she rose and threw herself full length on the bed. "Life is too hard for me," she cried; "why was I born?"

CHAPTER XVI.

ILLYNE'S confinement to her room disarranged Prince Turgeoff's plans. Time was passing and nothing being done, and he was getting more and more unreasonable and irritable. The only thing that seemed to steady him was play; and though his luck was phenomenally good, he often broke off in the midst of a winning run, and went moodily home by himself. He took to drinking heavily, and when Pietroff suggested danger, told him with an oath to mind his own business. Once or twice, late at night, he had broken out into a state of maudlin sentimentality, — a thing so foreign to him that it frightened Pietroff more than if the Prince had been attacked by delirium tremens; and at last having no one else to confide in, he told Mrs. Gordon that he was afraid Turgeoff was losing his mind.

That lady labored without ceasing to find out the cause of Turgeoff's evident depression, and finally irritated him into telling her part of the truth.

It was one evening after a card-party had been held in her rooms, and all but the Prince and his friend had gone. Mabel and Pietroff were standing, partially concealed by the curtains, in the deep window of the salon, and Turgeoff, who had been drinking all the evening, sat moodily beside Mrs. Gordon on a sofa at the opposite end of the room. The lights were turned down, and there was no sound but the rattle of an occasional cab outside, and the murmur of whispering voices in the window.

At last Turgeoff rose, walked to the side-table, poured out and drank some brandy, and then returned and seated himself without a word.

"You are not in a pleasant mood to-night," said Mrs. Gordon.

Her companion stretched out his legs, crossed his feet, thrust his hands deep into his pockets,

and answered nothing. He was long past being civil to Mrs. Gordon, and her feeling toward him had already changed from blind infatuation to one of mingled fear and admiration. Finally, however, she plucked up courage and spoke again. This time she was more successful.

"Who is Pietroff?" she asked suddenly.

"A friend of mine."

"Is he rich?"

"Very."

"Of good family?"

"None better."

"Do you think he is in love with Mabel?"

"Why?" asked Turgeoff, straightening himself, and looking at her.

"Well, he acts rather like it," she answered doubtfully.

The Prince smiled, and stretched himself out again. "He may be," he said, "but he'll never marry her."

"And why not, pray?"

"Simply because he's engaged to Miss Illyne Tolofski."

This reply was unpremeditated, and for an instant the Prince regretted it. Then it came to his mind, that if Pietroff was playing any double game this might head it off, and the idea pleased him.

Mrs. Gordon was struck dumb with amazement. Finally she managed to gasp out, "You can't mean to say that!"

"Yes, I do!" retorted he, "and don't make a noise about it. I only told you so that you could protect your daughter, and because I knew you would n't repeat it."

"Of course I won't," she answered in a weak voice.

Turgeoff's mustache moved as if there was a smile under it. "You 'd better talk to Mabel," he said; "she may be building some hopes on his attentions. If she is, tell her they are useless."

Here the Prince turned and faced Mrs. Gordon, and if it had been lighter she would have been afraid of his look. The brandy was beginning to work, and as the fumes mounted, his habitual caution diminished.

"You understand me," he said, "such hopes are useless."

She shrank back at his tone, but curiosity conquered fear.

"You have always denied taking any interest in Miss Tolofski," she said as calmly as she could, "but I always knew you did."

"Interest in her? I hate her!" he broke out.

Mrs. Gordon was delighted: at last the Prince was beginning to talk.

"Hate her?" she repeated, "why, I thought you were the most passionless of men."

Turgeoff turned in his seat, and grasped the back of the sofa with an iron grip, and his features worked as he spoke.

"Listen!" he said harshly, "since you must know. I loved that girl's mother, — *loved* her I tell you! Do you think you know what that means? Well, you don't, and never will if you live a hundred years. I more than loved her, — I worshipped her. She might have saved me from the life I've led for the past twenty years, and made a prince of me in reality;

but she preferred Tolofski, a miserable weakling whom I could — no matter; she got him, and much good he did her! Did you ever read in your everlasting novels of love turning into hate? It's true! I hated her, and I hate her memory. As to the daughter, Pietroff will marry her, and later on she'll join the rest of her precious family wherever they are."

Mrs. Gordon was pale from excitement. What little mind the woman possessed had been concentrated in a jealous hatred of Illyne, and even this confession of love for the mother did not destroy her suspicions. She said instantly, —

"You are keeping something back about the daughter; what is it?"

"Yes," he replied, more coolly, "I am keeping something back, but you shall know it in a few days. Not to-night, it's too late. I'm off now," and he arose and walked again to the side-table.

Both of them had forgotten the two persons in the window. They had at first been too much absorbed in their own talk to listen, but as Tur-

geoff's excited voice filled the room, Pietroff pulled Mabel within the curtains and stood silent and intent, doubting whether he should interrupt the conversation or not. While he hesitated, the Prince finished abruptly with the sentence, "As to the daughter, Pietroff will marry her."

Mabel heard it too, and grasping Pietroff's arm fiercely, said, —

"Is all that true?"

It was a bad position for a man trying to play a double game, but he rose to the occasion. Taking her hand gently from his arm and holding it in his, he said in his low smooth voice, —

"Mabel, you know it is n't!"

"I don't know."

"Very well; then listen. I will marry *you* to-morrow. Do you consent?"

"Yes," she said with an involuntary shudder, "I consent."

Thus Turgeoff's lie brought about an unexpected result, and proved what he knew before, how unsafe it is to trust to alchoholic inspiration.

In the privacy of his apartment in the Hotel Continental Pietroff reflected on what he had said to Miss Gordon, and what she had said to him. Turgeoff's conversation with Mrs. Gordon, which they had overheard, convinced him that his former master meant to force him into a marriage with Miss Tolofski. Such a connection he was not now inclined to make, because he thought he knew of one in every way more advantageous and easier to accomplish.

"Turgeoff may have been drinking," thought Pietroff, "but not enough to make him believe for a moment that he could trust a secret to that woman. The story will be all over town in a week."

To such a report Pietroff had no objection, if it did not interfère with his own plans. His remarks to Turgeoff about settling down had been more serious than that gentleman suspected. If he could marry a respectable woman with some money, that, and what he had saved, would buy a solid position in society. The watering-places of the continent would no longer know him as an adventurer; he would be beyond

the necessity of looking constantly over his shoulder, and could walk always with the firm step and confident carriage of an honest man. What if he had used doubtful methods to reach his goal, and drawn his sustenance from the vices of his betters? This ought not to trouble him. The first steps in the climb from low ground are always unclean. Out of the slimy mud on the bottom the lily draws the pigments which paint its lovely blossom. Better to finish his career as a philanthropist and an honest man, than begin with birth and wealth and end a miserable victim of unbridled desire.

Just now Pietroff could not see his way clear to advancing on his own road and helping out the plans of Prince Turgeoff at the same time; nor did he care to risk a present quarrel with his patron. It therefore seemed on reflection a wise thing to carry out his sudden determination to marry Miss Gordon at once; a secret marriage could be easily managed, and after that he could work on any line he chose, free from anxiety as to the outcome of it all.

He really fancied Miss Gordon; there was a

certain shrewdness about her which appealed to him, and her criticisms of men and things showed wisdom beyond her years. She was superficial but bright, and had enough wickedness about her to charm his moral sense. The only doubt was about her fortune. On this point he had managed to satisfy himself by asking the young lady herself in regard to it. His mind had been so occupied with putting his questions cleverly, that it had not occurred to him to doubt the truth of his information. Miss Mabel had answered with the simple frankness for which she was distinguished. The Russian had fascinated her, and her heart was set on captivating him; she did not therefore hesitate to color her facts, when her quick mind saw what he wanted. Of his position and wealth she had no doubt, since both Prince Turgeoff and her mother had spoken freely of them. Blinded by desire they had both climbed to a place from which they must get an ugly fall, and it is only a weak-minded charity that can sympathize with them.

Fred's continued attentions to Miss Gordon formed an effectual cover for her more serious

plans. She led that youth a willing captive, nor could he be made to see a fault in her. Leslie said all she dared, but Fred was not inclined to listen much to one who had herself chosen in opposition to the ideas of her family. He failed to see the difference in the two cases. The slight touches in dress and deportment which caused Leslie to place Miss Gordon in the "impossible" class were unnoticed by the blinded boy. He was of that age and in that state of mind when freedom in the use of "men's talk" makes a "jolly girl," and actions which instinctive modesty should preclude were evidence that "there was no nonsense about her." It was fortunate for Fred, therefore, that his growing passion should get a blow which opened his eyes and brought him to Leslie after he had recovered, in contrite sorrow for scorning her advice.

The blow came a few days after Mabel and Pietroff had taken their sudden resolution. It was at an evening entertainment at our friends' the Sevastis. Strains of sweet music and the fragrance of blossoms were in the air. The

silver moon, that calculating encourager of youthful madness, smiled broadly down on a scene of flirtation and frivolity. Numerous couples were walking back and forth on the broad piazza. There was a refreshing rustle of skirts, a continuous sparkle of jewels, the gleam of polished necks and arms, and glimpses of fresh girlish faces dimpling with smiles, or demurely receiving their nightly portion of compliments from their black-coated escorts.

Among these there was no one happier than Fred. He had faithfully performed his duty to his aunt and Leslie, afterward had a chat with Miss Illyne, then taken two glasses of champagne with "that awful little Teddy Margrave," whom he found planted at the supper-table, which was conveniently and prettily hidden behind a screen of smilax and exotic shrubs; and now at last he had managed to secure Miss Gordon, taken her away in fact from that smooth-faced Russian whom he is beginning to hate.

Miss Mabel was radiant, and the look she gave Fred as they passed out into the air caused his heart to flutter.

"Shall we sit down?" he asked.

"Not here, surely," she answered; "can't we find a quieter place? There, just round the corner, if only it isn't occupied. Ah, how lucky! And here are two chairs,—arm-chairs, too;" and settling herself in one, with her back to the light, she turned the other so that she could put her feet on its side-rounds, and motioned Fred to sit in it. "Now," she continued, "where have you been lately, you bad boy?"

Fred sat down deliberately, getting himself into an easy attitude, with a delightful thrill of anticipated happiness. Miss Mabel rattled on with charming volubility. Finally she leaned forward to emphasize some remark, and placed her hand close to Fred's on the arm of his chair. With a boldness born of two glasses of wine and the semi-obscurity, he placed his over it, and gave one vigorous squeeze.

Mabel stopped talking and twisted suddenly about in her chair. It had taken good pluck to keep from responding to Fred's gentle pressure with a cry of pain. She did it, however, and making a feeble effort to withdraw her hand,

murmured with downcast eyes, "You should n't do that, Fred."

But Fred's courage was up. His heart was going like a trip-hammer, and he felt that the supreme moment of his life was upon him. The supreme moment did not however bring eloquence with it. He raised the hand to his lips and kissed it, but all he said was, "Oh, Mabel!" There was another feeble flutter, at which he managed to say, "Don't take it away! I want to tell you something."

"Well?" she said softly.

"Well," he repeated, "well — I — I love you! and — confound it, Mabel, you know what I want!" and now the boy's feelings burst through his embarrassment, — "I want you to promise to marry me."

Mabel sat perfectly still; Fred could not see her face, for she held her other hand over it. His heart seemed to stop beating as he waited, for he believed that her next words meant for him future bliss or hopeless despair. Finally she murmured, "I 'm very fond of you, Fred, and I would like to marry you, but — "

"But what? Don't tell me you can't!"

"I must. I can't marry you, because — because I'm married already."

Shortly after, Pietroff and Mabel were promenading up and down in the stream of couples on the piazza.

"Where has he gone?" asked Pietroff.

"Home, I fancy; it was awfully funny."

"Do you think he'll tell?"

"No, he's safe. No boy likes to be laughed at."

But Fred had not gone home. He was inside behind the exotic plants, with "that awful little Teddy Margrave."

CHAPTER XVII.

MONTE CARLO lay basking in the sun, extending a smiling welcome to the people whom the train from Nice had deposited at the foot of its cliffs, and looking fresh and sweet in its verdant setting as they climbed the easy ascent to its pleasant palaces.

The day before, the Baroness Kaldenberg had arranged to go to this very earthly paradise with Illyne, — neither of them having ever seen the place, — and had asked Munroe to act as escort.

It was Miss Tolofski's first expedition since her accident, and she was somewhat pale and quiet, and walked with a decided limp as they made their way slowly up behind the rest. The conversation in the cars coming from Nice had excited her very much.

Munroe had heard the report of her engagement to Pietroff just after accepting the Baron-

ess's invitation. It had upset him completely; the story had come from Mrs. Gordon through Mrs. Harding, and he believed that it must be true. It was impossible to excuse himself at so late an hour, and when he called for the ladies in the morning he was angry and unhappy.

They saw at once that something was wrong, and though Munroe tried to seem unconcerned, he only succeeded in being unpleasantly flippant. The ladies had also heard the report, and Illyne had been made nearly ill by its audacious falsity. It is probable that she would have spoken of it instantly to Munroe, had not the Baroness warned her that her motive might be misunderstood. It was therefore a great relief when, as they were nearing their destination, Munroe suddenly said, "By the way, Miss Tolofski, I hear that you are open to congratulations."

This being said *apropos* of nothing, in an exceedingly careless tone, and at the end of half an hour's journey, made it perfectly apparent that Munroe had had it on his mind all the time. It was quite as natural as the schoolboy's casual

postscript, mentioning his accidental shortness of funds.

With an equally unsuccessful effort at appearing unconscious, Illyne answered, "Indeed, and for what reason?"

Then Munroe told her the report he had heard, and Illyne made an emphatic, indignant, and sweeping denial, closing with an anathema on all persons who talk of affairs not their own. As she continued, Munroe's face cleared and his manner changed; and as they made their way slowly up the stone stairs at Monte Carlo, the Baroness noticed with an amused smile the anxious, almost agonized expression with which he watched every step of Illyne's progress.

Finally she exclaimed, "Illyne, dear, it is quite impossible that you should go on without aid; take Mr. Munroe's arm while we climb the hill."

Munroe started forward eagerly, and Illyne, resting her hand on the stone balustrade, turned toward him, hesitating. She felt a sudden shyness, and the warm color swept over her face; at last she said, "I dislike to trouble Mr.

Munroe, but I find that I am lamer than I thought."

Munroe reached forward, and taking the hand which hung by her side placed it gently on his arm. "Now lean on me very hard," he said, "and see how easily you will go up the rest of the way."

She gave a little sigh of relief, and took him at his word.

Thus there were two persons, of all those who rushed from the train and up the stairs in haste to try their luck, who were not thinking of money or gain, but had arrived at a quiet way-station on their road to happiness; and as they stood side by side at the top of the cliff, and looked down on the blue sea, lying contentedly in the rocky bay's encircling arms, they both of them forgot what had brought them there, nor noticed that the Baroness was waiting patiently, — still with her amused smile, — to go on into the gardens.

At last Illyne withdrawing her hand said, "Thank you so much. I can go alone now perfectly well;" and she gave him a bright, happy

look as she said it, for it had been sweet to her to lean on a strong arm even for so short a time.

Very soon they were seated in a shady spot near a fountain, and Munroe told them of a curious dream he had had the night before.

"You remember asking me at the Hardings' if I could act as your escort, do you not, Baroness?"

"Yes, perfectly."

"Well, last night I had a strangely vivid dream about coming here with you. I thought we were standing by one of the roulette tables, and I was about to toss five francs on the black opposite, when Miss Tolofski touched my arm and arrested my hand. Her face was strangely set; her eyes glittered, as I have seen gambler's eyes when under great excitement; she leaned eagerly forward and whispered, 'Put it on the red!'

"Instinctively I obeyed, dropping the money on the square just in front of me. The ball was started, and after buzzing around the wheel a few times ran bumping up and down as the

motion slowed, and finally dropped into a pocket. 'Rouge gagne!' drawled the croupier, and I found another five-franc piece by the side of mine. I reached out with a laugh to take my winnings, when Miss Tolofski again stopped me.

"'Leave your money on the red, till I tell you to move it,' she said.

"Again the ball buzzed and rattled and fell, and again the red won. The third time it happened, and a fourth; then her voice whispered, 'Change to the black.'

"I gathered up my winnings, and passing around the table placed them on the black, and black won. Then I stood watching Miss Tolofski as she indicated with a motion of her hand or head when and how I should change, and each time the pile was doubled. The silver was changed to gold, the gold to notes, till now at each turn I placed the limit on the cloth, and we became the centre of all eyes. Miss Tolofski heeded them not; she had forced her way close to the table, and now placed her finger on number twenty-one. On this I put the full

amount, and amidst perfect silence the ball fell, and the croupier's indifferent voice was heard, as he called the winning list; then rising slowly, he added, 'Messieurs et Mesdames, on ne jouera plus ce soir.'

"We had broken the bank!

"When I turned, elated with success, Miss Tolofski had disappeared, and — and—"

"And what?" asked the Baroness. "Had she fainted?"

"No, worse than that; she was found — but I won't tell you the rest."

"You must!" said Illyne rising; "where was I found?"

"Out here," he said, "on one of these benches, with a bullet through your head."

"Come on!" said Illyne, in a strange voice, "I am going to the gaming rooms!"

She walked ahead, regardless of her lame foot, and stood in the entrance, chafing at the delay, while Munroe got the necessary ticket.

At last they entered, and Illyne passed directly through the anteroom, and went to the nearest table. Munroe looked at her curiously,

and felt a little superstitious thrill as he noticed the absorbed way in which she watched the turn of the wheel. In a moment she said impatiently, —

"Come, begin! Where is your money?"

"But do you think I'd better? I hope my foolish dream has n't affected you."

"Please begin," she repeated, hardly noticing his protest. "I *must* see if it is true."

Munroe took a five-franc piece from his pocket, and laid it where she indicated. He won.

"Leave it there," she said; and a strange creepy sensation came over him as the ball dropped, and a voice said, "Rouge gagne."

He turned and looked at Illyne. She stood erect, tightly grasping the back of a chair with both hands; her eyes glittered, and the concentrated red of fierce emotion glowed in her cheeks.

A man in the opposite crowd was watching her too. He had been playing, but had ceased when he saw her enter, and now stood absorbed in her face, watching every change of expres-

sion. In a moment he turned and addressed some one who stood beside him. "This will never do," he said. "I must stop it; if *that* gets a hold on her, the money won't last long."

Twice more the red won; then Munroe broke the spell. He raked in the growing pile, and passed it across the table to the black.

Illyne started forward. "What are you doing?" she demanded fiercely. "Leave it where it is."

"No, you are wrong this time," said Munroe quietly. "I bet on the black."

Scarcely had he spoken, when the flying ball settled with a click, and the pitiless rake of the croupier swept in the loser's piles. As Munroe saw his fall into the banker's hands he felt a sense of relief, as if awakening from a nightmare. Turning to Illyne, he said cheerfully, —

"Well, you were right and I was wrong. Catch me going against a woman's instincts again!"

She looked very pale as she answered, — "No; you were right. Take me away from this place, — it is horrible!"

But they were not through with the gambling-hall yet, for as they turned to go out, Prince Turgeoff and Pietroff stood in their path.

Illyne flushed and drew back as she saw them, but it was too late to avoid the meeting.

Pietroff at once began a lively conversation in French with the Baroness; and Turgeoff, bowing coolly to Munroe, said in a distinct tone,—

"Will Miss Tolofski grant me a very few words? We need not move from this spot if Mr. Munroe will kindly excuse the private delivery of a message of importance."

Munroe drew back a few paces and Turgeoff, without waiting or taking any notice of Illyne's look of astonishment and hesitation, came close to her and said quickly, —

"I saw you gambling just now. You must not do it. It ruined your father, and I saw his look in your eyes."

Illyne started at his reference to her father, but said at once, "I cannot understand why you speak thus to me, and I do not care to hear my father mentioned."

Turgeoff glanced at her proud face and scornful mouth, and for once acted on impulse.

"I'm damned if I'll stand her airs," he muttered; and then stepping in front of her as she began to move away, he leaned forward and said a few words in a low tone.

Illyne shrank as if she had received a blow; but Turgeoff took another step and whispered,

"You have heard the report of your engagement to Pietroff. Marry him and go away; otherwise," — and he shrugged his shoulders and extended his palms after the expressive Italian fashion.

Illyne had by this time recovered her composure. Standing straight up, she looked Turgeoff squarely in the eye and said, —

"I know not how you learned my story, nor what you try to do with me; but I do not fear you, for what you tell I knew long since. Now let me pass, please."

Munroe, who saw her motion, stepped forward; and Turgeoff, unable to answer, moved aside and lifted his hat with a smile as they passed him. Then he turned to Pietroff who

had come up, — "I've made a mistake," he said with a curse; "she is more clever than I thought. But it won't save her. To-morrow, you must do your part."

Illyne spoke a few words to the Baroness as they passed out, upon which she took Illyne's hand in hers, and Munroe heard her say, "Poor child! poor child!"

As they turned to go down the long stairs leading to the station, Munroe asked Miss Tolofski to take his arm. She did so without a word, leaning heavily on him as if not only lame but weary. About half-way down she was seized with a sudden tremor which alarmed him.

"Are you cold?" he asked.

"No; not cold. I was thinking where it was you said I was found in your dream."

After this, almost in silence they made the short journey back to Nice and to their hotel. As they passed the reception-room, to go upstairs, some one stopped the Baroness, and Munroe and Illyne were left an instant alone.

"Illyne," he said, — and neither of them noticed that he used her first name, — "Illyne, what

is the matter! Can't I do something? Can't I help you? If it is that man Pietroff—"

"No," she cried, "it is n't; and you can do nothing. No one can help me, not even God."

"But you will tell me?"

"There is no use. I did try once, but was afraid. Now every one will know, and you will be like all the rest."

No reply was possible, for the Baroness joined them; and the two ladies went upstairs together and entered Illyne's room.

Illyne closed the door, and taking her friend's hands in hers, said,—

"You know my story, and you brought me here. Now promise that you will take me away early to-morrow morning. I *must* go."

"But where?"

"I will go to San Remo, and my brother must see me there before he comes here. Do you promise?"

"Yes, dear," said the Baroness sadly, "I promise."

Upon that Illyne began eagerly to pack

her things, and the Baroness sat down and watched her.

"Are you sure that you are doing right to go, Illyne?" she asked at last.

"No; I'm sure of nothing; but I must go. If he deserts me, as all the rest will when they hear the story from Prince Turgeoff, I shall not be here to see it, — to know it. I am not afraid of the world, but of him. I dare not risk it. Do not argue with me; help me to get away."

"Perhaps you are right," sighed the Baroness; and without another word went to her room to prepare for their departure.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FAR away in Paris, in his scantily furnished studio, Serge Tolofski had been using all his God-given talents to transfer to canvas a bit of the world's truest beauty. He felt that he was working for more than art or fame; that on the result of his first public venture hung the happiness of his life. What wonder then that he used every moment of daylight to labor, taxing all his powers to reproduce the brilliant aspect of a perfect Autumn day!

The season was too late to work in the field, and Tolofski had to depend on his studies and his memory, which even in that dull room took him back into the recesses of the brown-tinted woods, and brought up the scent of the dying ferns and the sound of the rustling leaves. With careful, patient touch he reformed a leaf

here, or bent aside a branch there to let the sunshine farther in. Leslie's face no longer troubled him at his work. He felt her near, and her gentle earnest smile of encouragement was always ready, when in the pauses from his concentration he let eyes and mind wander.

Thus his picture grew in beauty. The sunlight came into it, and glorified the autumn colors. The breeze crept gently through the wood, moving the branches, and turning up the soft under-facings of the foliage. A broad yellow leaf floated slowly toward its fellows, already drifting into windrows on the ground; on the steep bank the tall grass-plumes waved and nodded, and one could fancy that one heard the sharp challenging chatter of the squirrel from the top of the gray stone-wall.

What greater joy than this, to be absorbed in work one loves, and moving on with sense of power toward a goal of happiness? And how blessed a thing it is that across those short periods in our lives when we live with satisfaction in an almost secure promise of

reward, no knowledge of the future can come to us. We can all remember such times, when the blood coursed freely and the step was light, when brain and hand worked harmoniously together, and we, looking at the result, pronounced it good ; when even the misty sticky days of a Parisian winter, such as Tolofski was living in, could not dampen our spirits, warmed with a sunshine from within.

After his work was finished, framed, and sent up for acceptance, Tolofski had a few anxious days till he knew it was to be hung; after which he thought he was justified in writing to Leslie simply to announce his success, and to say that if the criticisms were favorable he should soon start for Nice to submit his case to her father.

After this he had some days of pleasant rest, with that comfortable relaxation which comes when after hard labor the task is accomplished and the tension off, — that lovely Indian summer between two seasons of necessary toil. He wandered aimlessly along the broad boulevards, gazing into shop-windows.

He sat in the big, cheerful cafés sipping vermouth, and often holding a newspaper which he did not read. He played dominos with Teresa after lunch, and submitted to the most barefaced cheating on her part. One night he strolled into the Théâtre Français, but carried away a very dim idea of the play, because he sat in the stalls, and gazed at the box where he and Leslie had been together that first delicious night. Very soon he found pleasant employment in reading the newspaper criticisms. Most of the notices of his picture were favorable, and some few enthusiastic in their praise. Said one: —

"Mr. Tolofski has shown himself, in his first exhibited work, to be a close observer, and a true, yet poetical, interpreter of Nature. He leads us with him to worship at her shrine. His style is manly and vigorous, and yet shows close attention to detail. We welcome him as a worthy follower of such men as Rousseau, Diaz, Troyon, and Courbet."

He had quite a bundle of such notices, most of them commonplace enough, but all pressed

into service to do duty as capital when he had to show his securities to Mr. Harding.

In due time a letter from Leslie came in reply to his,—not very long or very gushing, but full of tender satisfaction at his success, which she said she had fully expected. Finally, to crown his happiness, the committee awarded him a medal. It seemed now that Tolofski's cup was full. He felt that it was safe to start for Nice. Going to his room he began to pack his trunk, singing as he did so an old German air which he and Illyne had learned together when they were children.

"Dear Illyne!" he thought, "she will be quite as happy as I am when she knows."

Just then the concierge handed in a letter. Tolofski knew his sister's large, firm writing, and with his thoughts full of her he broke the seal at once and read.

It was the letter which Illyne had written after her interview with Leslie, and before her trip to Monte Carlo. It told him how Leslie had, with pretty hesitation, confessed the secret of her love, and all her hopes and fears; of

how she had learned to love and admire Leslie, and how there was no one in all the world to whom she would more willingly intrust her brother's happiness: —

"A sweet, noble girl; but oh, Serge, you do not know, and I am to blame that you do not. I thought it might never be necessary to tell you. I have borne it all alone, but now another is involved with us, and I must speak. I know I can trust you to do what is just. Come to me first when you get to Nice. I cannot write as I would, but must tell you myself. I am only a weak girl, and, dear Serge, I need advice too, and strength and comfort from some one stronger than I am."

Here was a mystery, and an unpleasant one. What could possibly trouble Illyne so that she should write like that, — Illyne, who was always so strong and self-reliant? He felt a shiver of impending evil. Visions of success and happiness fled before this uncertain something which came to overshadow them. He tried to resist the feeling, but it was useless. The day was over and the night was coming on. Its cold air pierced through everything and chilled his very soul.

He arose and paced uneasily up and down. "She ought to have told me all or nothing," he thought. "It is cruel. She cannot know how my happiness is involved. If anything happens to break it now, it will kill me."

Then it occurred to Tolofski that possibly it was some trouble about money. Illyne was always careless about such matters; and this thought gave him some comfort. In the confidence born of recent success, the loss of money seemed of minor importance to him, — as indeed it always ought to an honest, hard-working man. The more he thought, the more likely it appeared that this was the trouble, and his nerves quieted sufficiently to let him think of his sister's probable unhappiness, which he had forgotten in his own selfish absorption. Thus he was able to go to lunch in a more cheerful frame, and answer properly the congratulations with which some of his brother artists greeted him.

Teresa was most impressive. She said, "Monsieur, permit me to drink your health. I have had confidence in your talent; and," waving her hand about the room, "perhaps in

the future you may paint something worthy to hang here."

"I should be honored to be in such company, Madame," he answered smiling.

But Teresa saw that something had gone wrong, and when Tolofski went into the little back room to pay for his lunch, she said quietly, —

"Monsieur is not feeling well, or something weighs on his mind? If it is anything I can do — As for money, if it is that, why, Monsieur knows —" and she shrugged her fat shoulders and spread out her hands as if to say, "What is mine is thine."

God bless thee, Teresa! Who that has known thee can say that the world is so hard a place? Ignorant thou art and fast growing stout and wheezy, but thy kindly spirit will dwell as a sunny memory in the heart of many a struggling worker in the world of art!

Tolofski was touched by the good intent of this simple woman. Sensitive and tender-hearted himself, such things affected him deeply.

"No, Teresa," he said, "I 'm not in trouble,

— at least in none that amounts to anything; but I'm going away to-night on an important journey, and one feels forebodings sometimes, you know."

"Ah, Monsieur, I know that well; but fear not, you will succeed and come back here again to tell me I was right."

"Whatever befalls me I shall know where to come if I need a friend," he answered heartily, and with that hastened through the café, and lifting his hat went out.

"Queer devil, that!" said one artist to another. "Moody, very! Never know where to find him. I wonder how he'd feel if he'd been rejected twice, as I have. Alphonse, more beer. If it were not for beer, life would be dark indeed. Festive, my boy, a game of dominos to see who pays."

Tolofski went straight to his room and finished his packing, thinking as he did so, "Whatever Illyne has to tell, it cannot take my reward away, — the great reward of being able to lay my prize at Leslie's feet and receive her approval and love before all the world."

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CHAPTER XIX.

THE next morning a message from Illyne flashed from San Remo to Paris and was delivered, and left in Tolofski's empty room. He had started for Nice the night before, leaving no address.

The uncomfortable hours of his journey stretched themselves out interminably, and as he sat silent in his corner watching the landscape fly past, a feeling of being rushed forward into some unknown danger came over him. Across the course which but a few hours before had looked plain and clear, a pleasing sunny landscape, there had sprung up a thick impenetrable mist, — a barrier placed by invisible hands to warn him of danger ahead.

Some sensitive, highly-wrought minds seem to reach forward into the future, feeling the very shadow of approaching events with spiritual

tentacles, which send back electric warning to the brain. Tolofski felt the warning, but the swift train bore him relentlessly on. He must face his fate and look behind the curtain, whatever sight awaits him.

At Nice, society had started on the manifold duties of a new day in its usual admirable spirit of energy and self-sacrifice. There are no people more faithful to their obligations than the men and women of fashion. Their simple devotion to themselves and incidentally to others, their lives of continuous labor involving mental torture and often great physical discomfort, their long-suffering patience and cheerful persistence in the race for leadership, and their magnificent snobbery when that position is attained, — all these, while they may not entitle Fashion's devotees to a place in the roll of the world's martyrs and heroes, ought at least to command our admiration, and secure them a place in some minor heaven, — say a Parisian one, — where each and every saint will wear a crown of diamonds — and a Worth dress.

On this particular morning all the well-dressed, chatty, smiling world of Nice was taking its constitutional, breathing for a few moments the fresh sea-air, and in the intervals of gossip and friendly criticism of one another looking with approbation, from the vantage ground of its broad walk, over the dancing water.

"An hour given up," as Mrs. Gordon said in her sweet way, "to the worship of lovely Nature."

Mrs. Gordon was a believer in Nature. That she liked it paved with asphalt and seen through gold-mounted lorgnettes in the morning, and in low-neck and short sleeves in the evening, is nothing against her. Every one to his taste. Let Mr. Burroughs sit on a damp rock and gaze in ecstasy at the flight of a bird as it shakes the dew from its wings, and rises lightly toward the sky, pouring out its heart in song; but don't blame Mrs. Gordon if she prefers the undulations of the waltz and the strains from a stringed band.

When Mrs. Gordon met Mrs. Harding that morning she said, "My dear woman, how well you are looking!"

Now, Mrs. Harding had a cold in her head and did not look well at all; but in answer to pleasant smiles and complimentary words what is there but to be effusive too? Mrs. Harding therefore responded with a bland remark on Mrs. Gordon's fresh color; and thus for the space of about two minutes there was poured forth from the clear fountains of these two souls the healing waters of flattery.

After these preliminaries, Mrs. Gordon proceeded to business.

She knew the intimacy existing between Miss Leslie Harding and Miss Tolofski, and having heard from her friend Prince Turgeoff, that morning, of Illyne's sudden departure and what he believed to be its cause, she felt it her duty to repeat what the Prince had said, to Mrs. Harding. This she did with very appropriate expressions of regret that such a thing should come out about any friend of Mrs. Harding. It was not intended as a friendly action, but Mrs. Harding could have leapt for joy as she listened.

Mr. Harding and Leslie, who had strolled on

during this conversation, now returned in time to see Mrs. Harding bid Mrs. Gordon a most complaisant and beaming farewell; in fact so beaming was it that Mrs. Gordon thought it overdone, and said to herself that her friend was indeed hard hit.

As they turned to resume their walk, Mr. Harding said, "Harriet, I don't like that woman; she has, they tell me, the reputation of being the worst gossip in Nice."

"Well, my dear," answered his wife, "you can't dislike her more than I do; but such people have their uses. Shall we go back now?"

"No; I'm off for a walk away from this crowd."

"Very well. Leslie, my dear, come along," and taking Leslie's arm she turned down a side street toward their hotel.

Presently she said: "Your father told me this morning that you had informed him of your friend Mr. Tolofski's success at the Salon, and that you expected him here."

"Yes, Mamma."

Mrs. Harding's tones were so quiet that Leslie's heart beat high with the hope that she was to hear at last a kind word from her mother; but the next sentence undeceived her.

"You know what my opinion of this man has always been. Well, I 'm rarely mistaken about any one, and I have n't been in him. He is not fit to associate with my daughter. There, my dear, you need n't reply. I decline to argue the matter. I only wish to ask one favor in regard to this affair."

Leslie bit her lips, and controlling herself said quietly, "What is it, Mamma?"

"Merely this. Before you have any talk with Mr. Tolofski, I wish to see him. I only want five minutes; after that you may do as you like. I suppose you won't object to that, will you?"

"Of course not, Mamma; but I hope you don't intend to say anything disagreeable to Mr. Tolofski. You must remember that he comes here with Papa's consent and with mine."

"It is unnecessary, my dear, to remind me that I have n't been consulted in the matter. However, I merely wish to ask him a few ques-

tions. They may or may not be disagreeable; but I think them necessary, and I shall ask them."

These words were final, and they walked the rest of the way in silence. On reaching the hotel Leslie entered their salon, but her mother went directly to her room, merely stopping to remind Leslie that as they were to go to the opera that evening, she must make no other engagement.

This short talk with her mother left a very unpleasant impression on Leslie's mind. The two were so utterly out of sympathy that she knew nothing of her mother's plans, and did not dare to ask. She only felt that agencies were at work which she could neither see nor control, and the joyous feeling which Tolofski's letter had brought, gave way to one of dread and anxiety. Fred's entrance was a relief to her nervous feelings; she glanced at him, expecting the usual cheerful "Hullo, Leslie!" but it did not come. Fred's face was sombre, and a nod of greeting was all that he vouchsafed. Crossing the room he threw himself on

the sofa near the window, and gazed moodily out. This was so unusual that Leslie forgot her own thoughts for the moment, and said, —

"Fred, dear, what's the matter? Are you ill?"

"Ill? No; but I'm sick and tired of the whole damned business."

"Why, Fred Manning!" she exclaimed, jumping to her feet, "you swore!"

"Did I? Well, you would if you'd been through what I have. See here, Leslie, you were right about that girl."

"About —"

"Yes; about Mabel Gordon. I suppose you have n't heard the news, have you?"

"No, indeed; what is it?"

"She's run away with that Russian, Pietroff."

"Run away!" echoed Leslie.

"Yes, and they're married."

"It can't be true, Fred. I saw Mrs. Gordon not an hour ago, and she certainly knew nothing of it."

"Well, she does by this time; and I've known of the marriage ever since the night of the Sevasti's reception."

"How did you know it?"

"She told me."

"And you kept it to yourself! Why did n't you tell me?"

"What was the use?" said Fred, gloomily. "You 'd only have laughed at me." With that he twisted about and bent over till his head rested on the arm of the sofa. "Oh, Lord!" he muttered, "what a fool I 've made of myself!"

This was the cry of egoism. All his feelings had resolved themselves into it. The boy, as hundreds of his kind have done and will do in like circumstances, was forgetting his loss in the sting of the blow to his vanity.

But Leslie did not philosophize. All she saw was the bent head, with its face buried in the cushion. What she heard seemed to her the cry of despair. Without a word she crossed the room, and placing her hand softly on her cousin's shoulder, stooped down and kissed the curly head.

"Don't!" said Fred. But there was a break in his voice, and a sudden suspicious heave of his shoulders. Leslie turned her back and

walked to the window. Standing there, her mind reverted to her own sorrows, and following an impulse she said, —

"Mr. Tolofski is coming, Fred!"

"You don't say so!" was the reply after a moment.

"Yes; and he has had his picture accepted."

Fred sat up and made an effort. He was grateful for his cousin's sympathy, and braced himself to give a fair return.

"That's good!" he said in a more cheerful tone, "and I'm glad of it!"

"I knew you would be," said Leslie, turning from the window. "But, Fred, you know Mamma is opposed to Mr. Tolofski, and I'm afraid something disagreeable is going to happen."

"They know he's coming, don't they?"

"Yes."

"Well, don't be a goose."

"But Illyne has gone away without a word."

"That was rather odd, I must say; but she's all right, you may depend. Don't get flighty; it isn't like you."

"I wish he were here, and it was all over."

"When is he coming?"

"Very soon; but I don't know exactly."

"Well, now, don't bother; it will be all right. If he makes a go of it, Aunt Harriet will give in with a little coaxing. I wish I had as little to upset me as you have."

"Poor boy!" said Leslie, distressed that she had forgotten her cousin's troubles. "I *am* so sorry, and it's very selfish of me to be talking about my own affairs."

"No, it is n't," said Fred, rising impulsively. "You've been a — a brick, and I sha'n't forget it."

With that he took a step toward Leslie as if to embrace her, but changed his mind, and turning, walked out without another word.

Then Leslie went to her room to dress for the afternoon. Nora was there busy laying out her things; and when Leslie entered and threw herself into an easy-chair with a sigh, the faithful maid ceased her operations and spoke her mind.

"Miss Leslie, dear," she said, "whatever is the matter with you lately? You 've gone wrong this long time. You don't take any interest, and you don't care what you wear any more 'n a lay figure."

"Nora," said Leslie, slowly, "you have been kind to me ever since I was a baby, and I 'm going to tell you something."

Standing expectant by the bed, Nora opened her mouth and waited; then as Leslie did not continue, she said, "Well, Miss Leslie, ye know, and the Lord knows, there 's nothing I would n't do for ye."

There was another silence, and then Leslie asked suddenly, "Nora, why did you never marry?"

"Oh, come along! Me to get married! who 'd have me?"

"Nora, I 'm going to be married."

"The Lord preserve us!" ejaculated the girl, as she plumped down on the bed; "but I 'm sorry for the other one," she added quickly.

"Whom are you sorry for?"

"I was thinking of poor young Mr. Tolofski

way off in Paris. I made sure he was fond of you, and him with such a sweet sister, too."

"But, Nora dear, it 's Mr. Tolofski I 'm going to marry."

"The Lord preserve us!" ejaculated the maid a second time; "but indeed, Miss Leslie, I 'm glad of it."

Here was a friend, and a true heart at last; and the arms that had many a time held Leslie, away off in America before the wandering life began or the world had touched her, held her again.

CHAPTER XX.

AT dinner Mr. Harding reported that the rush to hear a favorite singer in one of her great parts had absorbed all the boxes, and that it was only with difficulty that he had obtained two orchestra stalls. For these the family did not seem very grateful, and he was informed that it would have been better had he bought none at all.

Mrs. Harding was accustomed to state, that in any emergency her husband could always be depended upon to do the wrong thing. To this Mr. Harding had a standard reply which he considered crushing, and which was invariably delivered in a ponderous manner, and followed up with a self-satisfied chuckle; and this evidently gave him so much pleasure that Mrs. Harding would sometimes begin the contest in order that he might have the satisfaction of crushing her. If all wives would use

like tact when they want supplies, instead of resorting to brute force, what a long stride the world would make toward the time when the Lion and the Lamb shall lie down together without mutual recrimination!

The two tickets were on hand, however, and some one must use them. Mrs. Harding did not care to do so, but proposed that they make up a party for the circus, where, according to Fred, the attractions were of a most unusual character.

Leslie preferred the opera, and whispered to her father that he must take her there. To this the self-sacrificing man consented, though he anticipated difficulty in getting his usual opera-nap outside a box.

Just after they had departed to their several places of amusement, an omnibus drove up, and Tolofski descended. The train had been nearly two hours late, and he was cold and hungry; but when the hotel door opened, and the servants ran out to take the luggage, he felt a thrill of delightful excitement and anticipation. He walked rapidly through the long

entrance to the office, and there asked for a room. Then remembering his sister's request just in time, said, —

"Is Miss Tolofski in?"

"No, Monsieur; Miss Tolofski left yesterday, with the Baroness Kaldenberg."

"That's very curious," muttered Tolofski; and then aloud, "Did she leave no message or note for me? I am her brother."

The man took down a package of letters, looked them deliberately over, and put them back in their place.

"No, Monsieur, nothing."

"Do you know where Miss Tolofski went?"

"The ladies did not inform us of their destination. They took the train going south. Perhaps some of their friends might know. They were much with the family of Mr. Harding, an American gentleman."

"Yes, I know Mr. Harding, and Mr. Munroe; are either of them in?"

"No, Monsieur, they are all gone out, — Mr. Munroe and Madame Harding to the circus, and Mr. Harding with Mademoiselle to the

opera. I myself gave the orders to the cabmen."

"Very well," said Tolofski, trying not to show his disappointment, "I will go to my room, and then have something to eat."

He dressed slowly, feeling down-hearted and depressed, and wondering much what Illyne's departure meant, and why she had left no word. As soon as he had finished eating, impatient of suspense, he wandered out into the town. Chance took him toward the Opera House; seeing its lighted portals, and the play-bills displayed outside, he remembered it was here that Leslie and her father had gone. Turning about, he walked up the steps into the entrance. It was late, and no one was visible. As he stood for a moment, hesitating whether to go on or not, the sound of footsteps attracted his attention. A handsome man in evening dress, with a light top-coat thrown over his arm, was advancing toward him.

Tolofski stared in an absent way, as one sometimes does gaze at a stranger, while thinking of something else. Suddenly the man

stopped short, turned white, and swayed as if about to faint. Tolofski stepped forward, fearing that he would fall, when to his astonishment the stranger shrank back with a motion of fear, and then turned and passed rapidly down the steps, casting a terrified glance over his shoulder. Going to the door, Tolofski watched till the figure disappeared down the narrow street, then re-entered, and went at once to buy a ticket; but the man's face was stamped on his memory.

"He looked as if he had seen a ghost," Tolofski thought.

Prince Turgeoff had been in an irritated state of mind all day. Pietroff had deceived him and run off with Mabel Gordon, and Illyne had disappeared, leaving no trace. He knew that Pietroff and Mabel were each deceived about the other, and that their future punishment was thus assured; but he raged at his discomfiture in regard to Illyne. Moreover, he had been through a trying hysterical scene with Mrs. Gordon, who insisted on believing that her daughter's flight and Illyne's disap-

pearance were both of his planning. It was therefore in no pleasant frame of mind that he started to keep an appointment at the opera. If he had ever heard that Illyne had a brother he had forgotten it, and when he saw Serge Tolofski, who was the image of his father, standing alone in the full light of the entrance, the sight overpowered him. The strained nerves gave way. He had indeed seen a ghost, and it took all his strength to turn and flee.

As Turgeoff walked rapidly back to his rooms, this idea of flight was all that remained to him. In feverish haste he packed a portmanteau, and ordering a cab drove rapidly to the station. He bought a ticket for Paris, and within an hour was seated in a corner of a compartment on the night express, trying in vain to blot out the image of the face he had seen. He sat upright and still, staring straight before him into vacancy, till a nervous person opposite, noticing his fixed look, ventured to rouse him. Then muttering an oath, he pulled his hat over his eyes, and putting back his head, pretended to sleep. But no

slumber came to Prince Turgeoff's eyes that night.

Meantime Tolofski had obtained his ticket at the opera and entered, meaning if possible to find Mr. Harding and Leslie in the audience, and stand where he could watch the face he had come so far to see. He soon found himself in the midst of a crowd of men standing within the door directly opposite the stage. Evidently they were pleased with the efforts of some singer, for there was great cheering and clapping of hands.

The hot air, the glaring lights, and the thunders of applause that swept from pit to gallery dazed Tolofski, so that for a moment he saw nothing distinctly; but shortly his eye caught the stage, and just in time to see the prima donna re-enter.

After one final roar of approbation, the audience settled down into a silence as impressive as the noise which had preceded it. Then intermingling with the soft strains of the instruments was heard the silvery bird-like voice of the singer, sweet, distinct, and strong, lifting

itself easily above the growing power of the orchestral harmonies, yet following each turn and quaver, till in a pause of the accompaniment it broke into an ecstatic lark-like trill that filled every corner of the vast building, just as a burst of sunshine fills a dark room with light. There was an instant's hush, such as precedes the storm, and then with a rustle and a murmur the applause began, and Tolofski found himself cheering wildly with the rest, swept away by the magic power of a great artist.

After the excitement passed off, Tolofski felt a little ashamed to have forgotten the object of his coming there even for a moment, and began to scan the faces in the boxes as well as he could without a glass. It seemed a hopeless task; and he was about discouraged when his eye fell on Mr. Harding standing in his place, with his face toward the entrance. He was stretching his limbs and gazing idly about, as many were, waiting till the curtain should rise again. Beside him sat his daughter, looking to those about like a quiet, self-contained

and rather cold young woman, but to her lover, the type of all that is perfect in her kind. Their seats were about mid-way down at the right, and near a side exit.

Tolofski tried to work his way along close to the boxes to where they were; but the passage was full, and he turned back, meaning to go around by the outside. Just as he reached the door the orchestra began to play, and the great curtain rolled up for another act. He stopped to look at the stage. It was set for a village night-scene. In the background was a church with lights shining through the windows, and the low sweet tones of an organ sounding from its interior. The attention of the audience was concentrated on the chorus, which was coming in from the wings, bearing a body in their midst and chanting a dirge.

Tolofski turned to go, but just as he did so, in the last glance one naturally gives as one turns away, he thought he saw a tongue of flame shoot out above the roof of the church. It was only a flash, and he might be mistaken; but somehow a great fear took hold of him.

In Paris he had once seen an audience in a panic at an alarm of fire, and he knew the horror of it. Without an instant's delay he darted out of the door, and down the passage to the side entrance; descending and pushing the curtain aside, he found himself close to Mr. Harding.

There was a slight confusion now perceptible on the stage, and the audience perceiving it, began to move uneasily. Leaning over, Tolofski touched Mr. Harding's arm and said, "There is some trouble behind the scenes; perhaps it would be better to step outside."

Mr. Harding looked up in amazement, realizing very little except that he was warned of danger. He rose at once, as did those about him who had heard Tolofski, and speaking to his daughter they began to move out with the rest. As yet there was no excitement, and they quickly reached the door. Here Leslie, blushing with pleasure and unconscious of danger, held out her hand to Tolofski in glad welcome. He grasped it hard and whispered, "Hold tight to your father and me. It will be a matter of

life and death to get out, but we have a good start."

They were none too soon; already in some mysterious way the thrill of alarm had passed over the house, and the air was full of the first movement of the people. In a second more, some one in the gallery saw the flame, and uttered that fearful cry which means death in such a place; as it rang out, the vast audience rose *en masse*, and a time of wildest confusion and indescribable terror began. The flames spread rapidly among the inflammable scenery, and the auditorium was soon filled with blinding smoke. Women and men fought for place like animals, tearing off each other's clothing in vain attempt to get forward, and trampling those who fell ruthlessly under foot.

The streams of people pouring from the pit and galleries filled the passage-ways almost instantly. The pressure was terrific, and progress only by inches. In the first rush Mr. Harding had become a little separated from the others, but Tolofski had thrown his arm around Leslie, thus keeping her by his side.

After this there was nothing to do but wait for the slow movement to carry them to the street doors.

As they stood thus, they could hear the despairing shrieks of the hundreds of suffocating, dying men and women trapped inside, and above all, the ever increasing roar and crackle of the flames which had left the stage and caught the wood work outside.

In those terrible moments the few feet between them and the exit seemed to lengthen into miles. They had escaped the awful scenes of death within, but the agony of suspense was terrible, and the danger of suffocation very great. Leslie bore it bravely, but felt that her senses were leaving her; finally she managed to speak.

"Serge!" she said, "where is father?"

"Close behind us."

Then in a moment Tolofski heard her voice again.

"Serge!"

"Yes!"

"I'm glad you're here."

Before he could answer, her head fell on his shoulder, and he saw that she had fainted.

"Thank God I *am* here!" he muttered.

The pressure of the crowd on every side together with the hold Tolofski had, prevented Leslie from falling, and they were carried slowly forward till at last the doors were reached. At this point there was one last excruciating crush, a sudden release, and they were thrown violently down the steps to the gutter.

Tolofski never knew how he managed to retain his hold, but he did; and somehow, by crawling and twisting and protecting his precious charge with his own body, he got where he could regain his feet. Mr. Harding, who had been close behind them, was by his side almost instantly, and there were plenty of ready hands to bear Leslie's unconscious form out of the crowd and to a carriage.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE circus proved entertaining. Auguste, the clown, tumbled himself about in a delightful way. The lady riders turned more or less graceful summersaults on the broad backs of their fiery steeds, and the trained pig absolutely refused to perform till his master took off his hat and said, "Monsieur Cochon, s'il vous plaît."

It was very amusing for that sort of thing; but Mrs. Harding had enough of it long before the close, and the party returned to the hotel before the alarm of the Opera House fire had spread.

They were seated in the salon chatting, when the door opened and Mr. Harding and Tolofski entered, bearing their still unconscious burden. Mrs. Harding turned very pale, but instantly rose and went forward to assist. Her presence

of mind rarely deserted her; but when Tolofski turned toward her, after helping to place Leslie on the sofa, it came very near doing so. It took her an instant to realize who it was, then she faced him angrily, and said, —

"What have you done to her?"

The question and tone dazed poor Tolofski. Without waiting for an answer, Mrs. Harding began to loosen Leslie's wraps.

Mr. Harding came to the rescue, and answering for Tolofski, said, "He has saved her life, Harriet," and then related the facts briefly.

Mrs. Harding, taken so completely by surprise, did not know how to act or what to say. She stood irresolute an instant, and then continued her work without a word.

At this, Tolofski started in a blind sort of way to leave the room, but Mr. Harding hastened after him, and taking his hand said, —

"As soon as this excitement is over and we know the extent of Leslie's injuries, we can thank you as you deserve. I'm going now for a doctor, and will send you the news as soon as we hear his report. We shall hope

to see you in the morning; and by that time, doubtless, my daughter will be well enough to thank you in person."

After this, Tolofski passed out accompanied by Munroe, but Mrs. Harding remained bending over her daughter.

After a while Leslie regained consciousness, and opened her eyes.

"Where am I?" she asked.

"You are here, dear, in the salon."

"Where is he?" was the next question, faintly put.

"You must keep very quiet, Leslie," replied her mother; "you have had a narrow escape. Here, let me move you up a little."

But as soon as she was touched, Leslie gave a quick cry of pain and fainted again. There was nothing for it but to get her to bed; and with Nora's aid this was finally accomplished just as Mr. Harding and Fred returned with the doctor.

Examination showed that Leslie's right arm was broken. In the violent fall outside the theatre it had been twisted under her, and the

doctor said it was lucky that no other bones were fractured.

"How long will this confine her, doctor?" asked Mrs. Harding.

"She has had a very great shock, Madame; not only physical, but nervous. I should advise her staying in bed two or three days, and she will have to keep her arm in a sling for three weeks or more."

"Ah!" said Mrs. Harding, reflectively. She was beginning to make up her mind what to do. The fact that Tolofski had just rendered her daughter a great service made a difficulty she had not foreseen. She was willing in every proper way to acknowledge this claim on their gratitude; but her duty to herself and her family was not affected by it.

Her daughter's feelings, — what were they? The sentimentalities of an unformed girl, and not to be seriously considered. Tolofski's future, — that was a matter which did not concern her. By an unfortunate chance he had wandered from the outside into the circle where Leslie had been born, and ought to rule, a

queen. He could not be tolerated there, nor allowed to take her out of it. The question was simple. Neither gratitude nor care for Tolofski's future entered into it.

Some of us may call her position heartless, cruel, and indeed immoral; but others who value consistency, and feel the necessity of keeping the integrity of society's laws, will say that she was quite right and had no choice.

Many of us secretly admire a life of good practical consistent selfishness, combined with a proper amount of cynicism, — the life of one whose mental horizon is limited, and who is not foolishly striving to see beyond it; of one who openly places gifts, acts of kindness and hospitality, and deeds of charity where they will be sure to benefit the giver. Perhaps there will come a time in the hereafter when the light of truth will be thrown with such power into the minds and hearts of these types and marvels of egoism that the scales will drop from their eyes, and they will see things as they are in the light of the heaven-born law of love; when they will realize the dreary emptiness

of lives like theirs, the falsity of all their standards, the pitiful weakness of spending all their time in working hard to get nowhere, and be at last nobody. There should be such a revelation, for in this world it is doubtful if such a woman as Mrs. Harding ever feels remorse, or even knows that she is wrong.

Munroe went to Tolofski's room with him, where, what with the fatigue of his journey, the excitement of the fire, and the feeling that things were not as he had expected, the poor fellow nearly broke down. It was a comfort however to talk to some one. He told Munroe of his uneasy feelings on the way, and finally of Illyne's letter, and his consequent surprise and disappointment at not finding her.

"What do you think it means?" he asked.

Munroe was walking nervously up and down.

"I don't know at all," he answered; "she apparently went away without a word to any one; but there is one thing sure, she is acting for what she thinks is the best. There is n't a more straightforward, nobler girl on earth than your sister."

"I believe that, and thank you for saying it."

"No, don't thank me, for I want to say a great deal more. Perhaps it's a queer time to do it, but after all it may serve to show that you can depend on me in all your affairs."

He stopped, and stood facing Tolofski.

"I have n't known Illyne very long; but I have learned to admire and love her as I never expected to love any one. She has the power of drawing out all the little good in me. I want no better guide in life than she can be, for I believe that every fibre of her nature thrills in accord with all that is beautiful and pure and right. In the light and by the influence of her sweet transparent life I see the possibilities of my own future, and know that I can do something not only for myself and her, but for humanity. There, old man, you did n't know I had any sentiment in me, or ambition either, did you?"

Tolofski had sprung to his feet as Munroe was speaking, and as he finished, grasped his hand.

"My dear friend!" he cried, "this is the first ray of real comfort I've had since I left my studio. Nothing could rejoice me more. I believe in you, I have learned to like and admire you; and as far as I have any power to do so, gladly place my sister's future in your hands."

"Perhaps I can make her happy, if she will let me," said Munroe. "But something serious has happened to upset her. I tried to find out what it was, but she put me off."

Then he told the story of the day at Monte Carlo, beginning with Illyne's conversation with Turgeoff, and ending when he had said good-night to her on the stairs at the hotel.

"Yes," said Tolofski, "there is something, and I'm afraid of it. I feel it coming. Pray God it may not destroy the happiness of both our lives!"

They were silent for a while, each filled with his own thoughts. Munroe had never before spoken his feelings about Illyne so frankly, even to himself, and he felt a pleasant glow of satisfaction, as one does who finds

himself unexpectedly the possessor of some lovely thing which he has longed for but never hoped to get. At last he noticed his companion's sad expression, and tried to cheer him.

"Don't you think you're a little unreasonable?" he asked. "Here you are, a successful young artist, with every prospect of gaining the reward you have been working for, and coming from Paris to claim it just in time to do a brave and romantic saving-act, which practically secures the 'Bless you my children,' and still you are unhappy; what can you ask more?"

"I don't know," answered Tolofski, with a sigh, "perhaps nothing; nevertheless something is out of harmony. Did you ever see that young American they call Festive at Teresa's?"

"Yes, I think so."

"That fellow draws beautifully, and with great strength: but when he paints, he has what we artists call 'the Red-eye,' — everything he does is full of dreadful color, and he can't help it."

"Well?"

"It is so with me now: I can find no fault with my plans or surroundings, they seem all right; but some devil that I can't control is coloring everything, all one shade, — black! black as night. I feel it; I know it; and I'm afraid! afraid, I tell you!"

He sprang to his feet and looked toward the door as if expecting some one to enter

"Come, come, Tolofski!" said Munroe, really alarmed, "you've been through too much to-day, and your nerves are completely unstrung. I've often told you to keep yourself more calm; now just turn in and get a good sleep. You'll be astonished how differently things will appear by daylight. I'll see you early. By Jove! it's early now; do you know it's nearly one o'clock? Go to bed like a good fellow, won't you?"

The artist's excitement proved to be but momentary, and he answered quietly, —

"I suppose I am upset, and you are right as usual. Yes, I'll turn in at once. I'm sure I ought to be happy; my own prospects are good, and then the news about you and Illyne.

Do you know, there was a time in Paris when I thought you were in love with Leslie? Funny mistake, was n't it?"

"Yes, funny mistake," repeated Munroe, remembering Miss Gordon's favorite expression, "and it 's a funny world. Now, not another word. Good-night, and I 'll see you in the morning."

Then he went to his room, and there resumed a pleasant train of thought, which kept him awake long after Tolofski had fallen sleep.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE next morning Leslie found herself so bruised and stiff, in addition to the pain from her arm, that she consented to stay in bed according to the doctor's orders. Her thoughts were constantly of Tolofski, and were not disagreeable, we may be sure, since she now placed over all the names which she had given him — such as good, noble, pure, and true — the crowning one, brave!

The works of genius are well enough; to them we bow in humble adoration. But common humanity feels no such thrill in the presence of its great masters as it does before the deeds of its heroes; and Leslie may be pardoned if she exaggerated the heroism of her lover, and ranked his simple protecting care with the bright examples of knightly bravery and devotion, with which every girl is familiar. She gave her mother a glowing

account of the whole scene, in which she made Tolofski a luminous central figure. The fact that she was most of the time in an unconscious condition made no difference in the picturesque details of her story.

Mrs. Harding heard her with smiling indulgence. "When Mr. Tolofski comes, I shall thank him for his bravery on your behalf," she said; and Leslie shut her eyes with a pleased smile, thinking that even her mother was conquered and coming over to her side.

When Tolofski did appear, Mrs. Harding received him alone in the salon. He looked pale, and had an anxious, embarrassed manner. He had forgotten neither Mrs. Harding's words nor her look of the night before, and was at a loss to explain them. Mrs. Harding, on the other hand, was prepared for this interview by deliberate thought, and had made up her mind just what she should say.

Tolofski of course inquired after Leslie's health and condition, and was told that she was much better, though unable to leave her bed.

"She wished me to thank you for all you did for her last night," continued Mrs. Harding; "and to her thanks I wish to add Mr. Harding's and my own. Leslie is all we have in the world, and in helping to save her you have laid us under an obligation that we can never repay."

"I only did what any one would have done."

"Yes, I know, but *you* did it; and I wish you to understand now, before I go on to say what is not so agreeable, that we thoroughly appreciate your bravery, and thank you for it."

"I want no thanks, Mrs. Harding; you must know why I came here, and that I would willingly give my life for the sake of my great love for your daughter. You know this, don't you?"

"I know that you say so, and that you have given good proof of your devotion. If it is as true and deep as you say, I can show you how to prove it still further."

"I am ready to do anything."

"What I'm going to ask will put your words to the test. I might perhaps have pursued a different plan, and forbid you to come here. I

was tempted to do this, but my gratitude has made me take another course. I am going to beg you to go away."

"But why?" he exclaimed in astonishment; "what has turned you against me?"

Mrs. Harding looked at him gravely, and for a few seconds was silent; then she said,—

"Is it possible that you do not see why I cannot permit you to enter my family, or do you imagine that I am ignorant of your history? I cannot believe the first, and if the latter is true, you are acting in a most unmanly and dishonorable way."

"It is coming," thought Tolofski, and he bit his lips, forcing back the flood of questions which sprang to them. It was a terrible strain for this excitable man, but he kept himself steady, and fixing his eyes on Mrs. Harding's, said slowly, and without passion,—

"I cannot understand, Mrs. Harding, any better than before, what is the cause of either your request or your language. Perhaps I did wrong in writing to Leslie before speaking to you or her father. I acted hastily; but I've

tried to make amends since, and have held no communication with her till the conditions she imposed were fulfilled. I do not feel that I have been unmanly or dishonorable, and I do claim to be a gentleman."

He spoke the last words with his head up, and a flash in his eyes.

Mrs. Harding was non-plussed. Evidently he did not understand her. She determined, therefore, to come directly to the point.

"I may have done you an injustice," she said; "but your sister knows, and I took it for granted that you knew, that you are the illegitimate children of a disreputable gambler."

It was a cruel, murderous blow, but her voice was smooth and steady. She sat quietly looking at him, and awaiting the effect of her words.

It was instantaneous, and so violent that even she shrank a little, as he sprang to his feet and took a step toward her.

"It's a lie!" he cried. "Who told you this?"

As he stood there with clenched hands,

and his whole body quivering with suppressed passion, it was evident that this was his first information as to the facts of his birth.

Mrs. Harding looked at him with something like compassion. After all, she had no personal dislike for the man; all she wanted was that he should go away at once and disappear from her horizon. She even understood and sympathized with his strong feeling developed under the sudden blow she had given, and therefore, instead of noticing his vehemence, answered quietly, —

"I see that I *have* done you an injustice. Had I thought it possible that you were not informed, I should have told you all this in quite a different way. It is at best an unpleasant subject, and one you and I cannot discuss in detail; but as to the truth of what I have said, I must refer you to your sister, if you know where she is, or if not, to Prince Turgeoff, from whom my information comes."

His sister! At the mention of that name the fire died out of his eyes, and he dropped back into his chair. This then was what she had

to tell. "Poor girl! poor girl!" he muttered, "and she has borne this all alone!" Forgetful of Mrs. Harding, he put his head between his hands and moaned, "God help us both!" It did not occur to him to doubt the truth of Mrs. Harding's statement now. She had referred him to his sister, and Illyne had warned him of some impending misfortune. Finally he asked, in a broken voice, —

"Does she know?"

"If you mean my daughter, no. I have told her nothing. Indeed, I only knew myself, yesterday. I shall tell her after you go away, or you may write to her."

"You expect me to go away without seeing her?"

"I think that is best. You know, as I said before, I might refuse to receive you; but I beg you to go. I believe now that you have been honest in this matter, and that very fact encourages me to think that you will do what is best for you both. You can't now ask Leslie to share your lot. No true man would pull down the woman he loves."

"Nor would I. But, Mrs. Harding, my birth does n't change *me*. Surely, if I was capable before of a man's work and a man's protecting love, why, so I am now. I tell you I have that in me which will make men honor me for myself. I should not drag her down."

"You may be quite right in your estimate of yourself, but until it is justified you can scarcely expect me to allow you to meet my daughter. I am acting in kindness both to you and her. Hard as it is, we must accept society's dictum about such matters. I cannot permit Leslie to make a misalliance, and you yourself would never be happy in a false position."

"But if we love one another?"

Mrs. Harding smiled as she rose from her chair; she had not intended to enter into an argument, and her patience was beginning to give out. She felt that she had shown Mr. Tolofski every consideration to which he was entitled, and more than he had any right to expect.

"I cannot enter into that," she replied;

"where that question enters, young people get unreasonable, and if they are not controlled, usually make a wreck of their lives. You must excuse me if I say that neither you nor Leslie is capable of judging what is best in this matter. I should be glad if you entered into my views and helped me carry them out; but if that cannot be, I wish to say distinctly that this affair must be broken off once for all."

"But has your daughter nothing to say to all this?"

"My daughter will do what I think best," answered Mrs. Harding, coldly. "I can't speak for her now, but have no doubt that when she knows the facts she will see the wisdom of this decision as well as I do."

"But if there is any mistake about the facts?" persisted Tolofski.

"There is no mistake; go and convince yourself. You will doubtless find Prince Turgeoff at his rooms."

Tolofski stood a moment irresolute; the suddenness of this blow had almost taken away his power of thought. At last he said, —

"I must have a little time to think. I must see my sister and this Prince Turgeoff."

"Very well," answered Mrs. Harding, "and meantime I will say good-by to you." She bowed without offering him her hand, and stood till he had closed the door behind him, then with a sigh of relief turned to go to Leslie. "Thank goodness, that's over!" she thought, "and he really behaved very well."

Still, the victory was on Mrs. Harding's side.

Tolofski on going out, went straight to his room. So far he had been, for him, extraordinarily quiet and well-balanced. His great love for Leslie, and a sense of all that was involved, had made him so; but it could not last long. The feeling that his whole life was ruined by no fault of his, a sense of bitter irretrievable loss, was rapidly sweeping away every other thought; and as he threw himself face downward on his bed, realizing his utter helplessness, the last vestige of self-control left him, and his frame shook with uncontrollable sobs.

If Leslie had seen him thus, would she have

changed her mind as to his being a hero; or would she have thrown her arms about him and whispered words of comfort? Ah, how gladly would she have stood by his side in this time of trouble, had she been permitted! To the sweet faith and true heart of youth his birth would have seemed — a misfortune? yes, but not a crime. Was it fortunate that between Leslie and this unthinking loyalty stood a conservator of family pride, a protector from society's sneers, in the shape of a self-contained and worldly-wise mother? Was it fortunate, or not? What is the world's verdict? Whatever it is, as we value our social lives, let us be wise enough to agree with it. It will not cost us much to do this; there is no bar-sinister on our family shield; but to poor Tolofski it is a hard thing to face the consequences of another's act. His future was not illumined by any ray of hope.

Finally he roused himself. At least he could see this prince who seemed to know his history so well, and who perhaps could tell him too where to find Illyne. This thought gave him the needed incentive to action, and he went out

at once to look up Prince Turgeoff. Again he met only disappointment. The man he sought had left for Paris the night before. Returning to the hotel, Tolofski was informed that Mr. Munroe had been asking for him. The mention of Munroe's name brought up their recent conversation about Illyne. It was now his duty to tell his sister's lover the story of her birth. Going to his room he wrote the following note:

MY DEAR FRIEND, — Mrs. Harding told me this morning that Illyne and I are "the illegitimate children of a disreputable gambler." These were her words. She referred me to my sister and to Prince Turgeoff for confirmation. Illyne has gone. I fear that not knowing when to expect me, she has started for Paris to prevent my leaving. At any rate, Prince Turgeoff has gone there, and I shall go to-night. I cannot stay here; Mrs. Harding has forbidden me to see Leslie, and I have no one to turn to. If you should happen to learn Illyne's whereabouts, may I trouble you to telegraph to me at once? I am unstrung and hopeless. I dread going back, but better anywhere than here. I shall write a note to Miss Harding and release her. If all this is true, I cannot ask her to go with me. This is all that is clear to me, — this, and that I must find Illyne. My place now is by her side.

Then he wrote his note to Leslie, and leaving them both at the office, gave orders to have his luggage sent, and after a hasty meal, reached the station in time for the afternoon express. Some time the next day a message from Illyne passed him on the way to Paris. It was dated San Remo, and said, "I return to Nice this afternoon; when do you come?"

CHAPTER XXIII.

NOT hearing from her brother in reply to her first message telling him to come to San Remo, Illyne had become nervous about the matter, and decided to write him the facts in her possession, thinking it better on the whole that he should know them before starting from Paris.

Illyne had learned these facts during her mother's last illness. The poor woman had been unable to give her daughter many details, for she never knew herself exactly how it had happened that she had no legal standing as a wife. The first intimation of her misfortune had come just after her supposed husband's sudden death, in the form of a letter addressed in an unknown hand, stating that her marriage had been a farce, and that her papers were forgeries. As soon as possible, she made

a journey to Paris, the scene of her hasty engagement and secret marriage, and there convinced herself that her informant was correct. Then her little remaining health and strength gave out, and she died soon after, without even the satisfaction of being certain if the man she had loved had been guilty of this crime, or whether he too had been deceived. He had treated her with growing neglect and coldness, but this she had attributed to growing passion for gaming from which she had tried in vain to win him. Had he been deliberately deceiving her all these years for purposes of his own? She could not quite believe it; but this uncertainty, and the dreadful certainty that her children were without a name, broke her heart.

Serge was away when his mother died, and it was only at the last moment that she found courage to tell Illyne the bare facts. The girl did not at first understand their full import, but when it gradually came to her she resolved that she would bear the burden alone: it could not be necessary that Serge should have his life

darkened by knowing what she knew. It was because of this generous self-sacrificing impulse that her brother was finally compelled to hear the facts of his birth from unfriendly lips, and was now on his lonely way to Paris, with his heart full of bitterness toward all the world.

Illyne's letter to him was a long sad one, and gave the history of their mother's life as nearly in her own words as she could recall them. After sending it, the poor girl's mind was somewhat relieved, and she was beginning to regain her accustomed brightness when the news came of the awful calamity at the Nice Opera House. In one of the accounts was a partial list of the killed and wounded. Among the latter Illyne saw Leslie's name. Instantly her thoughts turned to Munroe. The list was only partial: might he not have been there too? Her imagination pictured him crushed, wounded, perhaps dying. In her nervous state she could not bear the suspense, and the second day succeeded in persuading the long-suffering Baroness to return with her.

"Perhaps I may be of some help," she said;

"and besides, I think I was foolish and cowardly to go away. I have done nothing to be ashamed of. Those who choose to turn away from me, may do so. I must learn to bear it."

The thing she dreaded most was seeing Turgeoff again. His mysterious interest in and knowledge of her affairs was inexplicable, and since he had spoken to her at Monte Carlo an uncontrollable fear of the man had filled her mind. But even this was overcome by her anxiety for news; and thus it happened that about the time that Serge was alighting faint and weary at Paris, Illyne stepped off the cars at Nice.

The object of her anxious thought was, as we know, safe and well. Not only that, but he had been wide awake the whole night before, thinking what he should do in the light of the new conditions revealed to him by Serge Tolofski's letter.

"I love her all the same," said his heart.

"Yes, but she is now impossible," said worldly wisdom.

"I will have her!" insisted the heart.

"Then you commit social suicide," replied the other.

"I don't care!" said the heart.

"That 's a lie!" quoth wisdom; "you can't help it."

Neither could he, for with his training, associations, and habits of thought he could not believe in going contrary to the prejudices of society.

He said to himself finally that as no word had passed between Illyne and himself, and since she had chosen to run away, he was justified in at least knowing more about the affair before he made any further move.

Was then Illyne's ideal, her golden statue, made with feet of clay? She was soon to know.

As the omnibus in which she and the Baroness rode from the station drove up, Illyne saw Stanley Munroe standing on the hotel steps, looking up and down the street with the air of one who hesitates whether to go out or turn back. He was safe, then! Her heart beat fast, and she shrank back in her seat, filled with an unrea-

sonable fear that he might suspect why she came.

As the omnibus backed up, Munroe gazed at it in an idle way, waiting to see the faces of the arrivals. The two ladies descended. Surely that was Illyne. His heart gave a great bound, bursting through all the fears and arguments which had retarded its full natural play for the past uncomfortable hours. One look at that sad wan face was enough. In an instant he felt that whatever the facts were, or whatever the world might say, there was only one possible course for him. In that instant it was revealed to him that this lonely girl had within her a sweetness and nobility that neither birth nor the approval of society could give or take away. Then his own true nature spoke in a way not to be mistaken or disregarded; and if any of us think more of truth and honor than of the world's verdict, and have a lingering belief in the blessed hallowing influence of pure honest love on the lives of men, we shall rejoice that its fires were kindled here in time to save a man from a cowardly soul-searing act, and a woman

from that fatal loss of faith in humanity which leaves the mind demoralized and even shakes belief in the Invisible Goodness.

Munroe passed rapidly across to where Illyne stood. He saw nothing but her sweet pale face, with its eyes half pleading, half afraid. He took her hand in both of his and said in a low voice,

"Illyne, why did you go away? You might have trusted me."

It was an unfair advantage to take, — there in the public street, with the eyes of the servants upon them. What could she do or say? She plucked her hand away, and the color rushed to her face; but Munroe was looking into her eyes, and thought there was no anger in them.

The joy which Illyne felt at finding a friend in this time of need was tempered by her distress, when she learned from Munroe that her brother had been in Nice and of his sudden departure. She knew then that he must have missed her first message, and was glad that through the second sent that morning, and her letter, he would have an explanation of her absence. She did not yet know, however, the extent and bitter-

ness of Mrs. Harding's opposition to her brother, nor in what a hopeless state of mind he had returned to Paris. Her own kind reception blinded her to the possibility of his misfortune. She and the Baroness went directly to their rooms, and there Illyne confessed to her friend a feeling of unaccountable elation, — unaccountable to her, but the Baroness had seen the look in Munroe's eyes as he spoke to Illyne, and thought she could give a fair guess at the cause of the girl's spirits.

After a while Illyne's thoughts turned to Leslie, and she sent a message asking if she could see her. Leslie's heart gave a bound of joy when she got it. That morning she had received her lover's note. It told her simply what her mother had said to him, and that under the circumstances he should go away leaving her free; and then he added, —

"Whatever happens to me, dear Leslie, I shall pray God to bless you always; for your love has entered into my life, and our short happiness will be the bright spot of my past to look back to out of the darkness which the future must bring me."

When Mrs. Harding came in, she found Leslie sitting up in bed weeping bitterly, with the note spread out before her. Then followed an interview, in which her mother's calm assumption of superior wisdom maddened Leslie into open rebellion, till words passed between them which neither could forgive; and where before there had been only a growing misunderstanding of each other's motives, there came, into Leslie's heart at least, a feeling which she had never admitted before, — one of distrust and enmity.

The mother was only doing what she really believed best for her daughter's interests, and it seems hard that all her words of experience and worldly good sense fell on deaf ears; that between her educating power and success had stepped in an irresponsible thing called love, blocking the way of self-interest, ready to shatter the laws and shock the prejudices of society, and break up what might in a few years have become a happy harmonious family, with two enlightened egotists in it instead of one.

Mrs. Harding saw the trouble, and pitted all

her skill and parental authority against it. She argued, entreated, commanded; but what are arguments or commands, against a reiterated and monotonous reply dictated by neither reason nor duty, but coming from the ill-regulated promptings of a young girl's heart? Of what use was authority or applied common-sense, when met only by the fretful, obstinate cry, "I don't care! I love him!"

Leslie had expected some comfort from her father, but in this she was disappointed. He had heard the whole story from his wife, and was inclined to think that as Tolofski had left of his own accord, it was as well to let the matter rest. He refused to be drawn into a discussion, and all that Leslie could get out of him was, "Wait till you get well, and we'll talk it over."

With this she was fain to be content; but she fretted and fumed at her helplessness, and could not forgive her mother for letting Tolofski go without one word of sympathy or hope. In this state of mind the news that Illyne had returned, came to her as tidings of great joy,

and her mother being out she sent Nora to ask Illyne to come down at once.

And what a relief it was to these two girls to open their hearts to each other! What a casting off of all restraint in the presence of common interests, hopes, and fears! What a happiness to give vent to feelings long concealed, and how difficulty and danger seemed to melt away as they talked of the length and breadth and depth of their love! With what breathless rapidity one sentence was joined to another, till to an outsider it would have seemed only a curiously involved and utterly unintelligible duet. And yet out of it all, out of the mingling of their laughter and their tears, came a sweet spirit of peace and trust which both of them needed in their future.

CHAPTER XXIV.

OUR friend Pietroff was in far-away Naples, busily engaged in cursing the day on which he made his first and only attempt to be honest.

When Madame Pietroff, *née* Gordon, found that she was not received everywhere with that cordiality and attention which the supposed rank and wealth of her husband should have commanded, it took her a very short time to realize that she had been deceived. Thereupon she at once made it clear to her lord that he too had based his plans on a misunderstanding; and in the mutual criminations which naturally followed, she developed powers of vituperation such as Pietroff had never imagined could exist outside certain circles which he had long since ceased to frequent, and which made him doubtful whether to knock her down or run away from her.

Being a cautious man, reflection brought him to the wise conclusion of the English poet, who says, —

> "To combat may be glorious, and success
> Perhaps may crown us; but to fly is safe."

He therefore fled incontinently between two days, disappearing utterly from his accustomed haunts, and the world knew him no more. He made a permanent choice between Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, preferring for the rest of his life to rest in the easy garments of sinful indulgence; and his wife, packing up whatever he left, which was not much, returned to her mourning parent.

Mrs Gordon, poor woman, was also wretched. The world, led by Mrs. Harding, who had heard of Fred's narrow escape, frowned upon her. There were certain carefully elaborated stories put into circulation, involving her name and that of Prince Turgeoff. Fickle society suddenly wearied of her white poodle, and the voices which had praised her taste now called her vulgar. In private she wept the bitter tears which the found-out always weep; and

shortly, hearing from her daughter, packed her boxes and went to join her.

Prince Turgeoff, the cause of all this woe, was in Paris, broken down in mind and body. Left to himself, he took little food and a great deal of absinthe and brandy. A less strong man would have gone under long before; but this one, though he felt himself in the rapids, was cool enough to realize and in a certain way enjoy the tumult of his wild descent.

The first night he had gambled heavily at the Jockey Club and won. The next day, following an irresistible impulse, he had taken a cab and revisited many of his old haunts, throwing his winnings about him as he went, and enjoying the sensation which his generosity created. In the afternoon he found himself in the Latin Quarter, and there came over him a vivid recollection of his student days, when he and Tolofski had lived together in the Rue l'Université and pretended to study art. He threw his head back against the cushions and closed his eyes. The cab was rattling down a narrow street leading from the Boule-

vard St. Germain; as it turned a corner the wheel struck the curb, and the Prince was violently jolted out of his reminiscences. He opened his eyes, and saw the name of the street on an opposite house; it was the Rue St. Jacob. Turgeoff ordered the cabman to stop. Paying him, he got out and walked rapidly up the street. It seemed only yesterday when he had walked here. In the middle of the block he opened a door on his left and entered a small room. It was nine o'clock, and dinner was over; but the place was quite full. Around him rose the familiar babel of many voices,—the same sounds, the same smells; it was like a dream. He walked to the other end of the room, and taking a seat at an unoccupied table called for some brandy.

It was Teresa herself who received the order; when she heard Turgeoff's voice she gave a start, and looked intently at him; then she toddled off to get the bottle, muttering to herself. After she had filled a glass she went back into her small room, and pulling down a dusty book from a shelf, sat some time at her

desk turning its pages; finally she shut the covers with a snap, got down from her seat, and returned to the table where the Prince sat. He had swallowed a portion of the brandy, and now sat with his legs stretched out under the table, and his eyes staring at the wall opposite.

Teresa interrupted his meditations. She said, "When you left Paris, Prince Turgeoff, you owed me thirty-two francs."

"Did I?" said the Prince, as if she spoke of yesterday. "Did I? Well, I've been in luck to-day. Here, take it out of that." And he put a hundred-franc note on the table.

Teresa picked up the money without a word, but her little eyes gleamed with joy. Her memory had not left her. It was a large sum, — thirty-two francs, — and she had never expected to get it. She brought the change and placed it carefully before the Prince. He did not notice it; already his eyes were fixed again, and he was alone with his ghosts.

Teresa stood a moment waiting. She had never liked the Prince, and the thrifty woman's

first thought on seeing him had been of this old debt; but now other memories were coming.

"Prince," she asked suddenly, "where is Monsieur Tolofski?"

A dazed look came into Turgeoff's eyes. He half turned in his chair and looked at the stout figure by his side. Then he seemed to realize for a moment where he was, and what she had asked.

"Sit down," he said, "and I'll tell you."

Teresa sat down, but she was frightened. For the first time she noticed Turgeoff's looks and manner. His face was flushed, his hand was unsteady, and his eye wandered as he spoke.

"You were fond of him, I remember that," he went on. "Well, he tried to get married; but Pietroff and I, — you remember my man Pietroff? a black-hearted villain he was, too, — we managed a mock ceremony. It cost some money, but it was well done. Then I shot Tolofski; but before I did that, I told him how much married he was. Then I wrote to the woman and told her; then I told the

daughter; then I met Tolofski at Nice, at the Opera House. I did, I tell you!" he cried out, as if she had contradicted; "do you think I don't know the man's infernal white face?"

Teresa was frightened and fascinated. Her mind, too, was in the past, and the image of a dark-eyed, pale-faced man was before her eyes as this half drunken, half crazy man spoke on.

The door was opening and shutting as men arrived or departed; Alphonse was flitting about; Teresa's assistant was making change at the desk; the marble-topped stove diffused a genial warmth through the room; the gas flickered amidst clouds of tobacco smoke; the dusky pictures looked down on the white tables, from which rose up the click and rattle of dominos and the mixed sound of laughter and talking.

Another breath of outside air rushed in as the door swung open. It stirred the smoke-clouds and rustled the papers as it entered. It struck Teresa's rheumatic shoulder, and she

moved uneasily and looked up. Advancing toward her was a dark-eyed, pale-faced man.

"My God! My God! Look!" shrieked Teresa.

Turgeoff, roused by her vehemence, turned quickly to where she pointed. Those about ceased their occupations, and half rising tried to discover the cause of the outcry.

The flush which wine and the heat of the room had brought to the Prince's face died out, and it turned ashy gray. There, close to him, stood Serge Tolofski.

On his part, Serge instantly remembered the face he had seen at the Opera House, and for a second the two men stood face to face looking into one another's eyes.

Suddenly the blood rushed back into Turgeoff's face. "Curse you!" he cried, "I 've had enough of this."

There was a flash, a loud report, and a wreath of smoke rolled slowly through the thick air toward the ceiling.

Everybody in the room crowded in wild confusion toward the table. Some one opened the

door and called loudly for the police. Teresa gave one look and fainted.

The Prince did not stir. He stood looking down at the still figure on the floor, with its arms flung wide apart, and its white face turned up to his.

CHAPTER XXV.

IT seemed for a time that Mrs. Harding, with the help of the fates and King Death, had won the final victory, and that the object which had threatened the safety of her excellent plans was to be removed.

That it was not so was no fault of Prince Turgeoff. The sudden appearance of Serge Tolofski's face and form had acted on him as danger always did, serving to steady his shattered nerves for the moment's need; and though his mind broke down completely as soon as the reaction came, when he fired, it was without a quiver of either hand or eye. As Tolofski saw the glitter of the pistol he had instinctively stepped back, and this slight change of position had saved his life, for the ball, instead of piercing the heart where it was aimed, had passed clear through the body, perforating the lung on its way.

The wound was thought to be fatal, but Tolofski had never abused his health by excess of any kind, and now the repairing forces called on to build up the shattered walls responded nobly, and slowly but surely did their work. Night and day his sister sat by his bedside listening to his heavy breathing, her sweet face pale with watching, but holding death back by her constant intelligent attention to her brother's every want.

Well for her that she had inherited from her mother long-suffering patience and that unassuming strength which bends but does not break, that nature which knows so well the endless dragging days of sorrow and suffering, but which comes out as gold tried in the furnace. Well for her too, that in her girlish days she had learned a simple unreasoning trust in a protecting Power above the powers of earth, and in the midst of her suspense could bow her head and say with child-like submission, "Thy will be done." In the face of calamity brought about by known causes, and depending for its cure on

natural laws, the use of such words may seem to some of us the weak utterance of an inherited imbecility; but all the world are not philosophers, and there will always be some, let us hope, who will know enough to rejoice in their ignorance of advanced ideas, able in times of trouble to get a ray of divine light and comfort through their simple faith.

One day, feeling tired and discouraged, Illyne left her brother asleep under the influence of an anodyne, and went out for some air and exercise. She chose the broad cheerful promenade through the Champs Elysées, and was walking listlessly along with eyes on the ground, when she was roused by Munroe's voice. After the usual greetings they walked on together.

"How is Serge to-day?" asked he, presently.

"Not much better. I am much discouraged, and doubt if he will get well." There was a tremble in her voice.

"Illyne," exclaimed Munroe, "you are overworking yourself. Promise me to take more rest."

"I cannot, till Serge is better."

"Then let me sit with him; let me do something. Please come to me freely; all I want is to take your brother's place while he is ill." He looked beseechingly at her as he said this.

"I can never thank you for your kindness and thoughtfulness in our time of trouble," she said, simply.

"Don't try," he replied.

After this they walked on for a time in silence, but Munroe seemed nervous, and kept glancing at his companion. Finally he said suddenly, —

"Illyne, I told a lie just now."

"What do you mean?" she said, looking up in amazement.

"I said that all I wanted was to take your brother's place. It is n't so. I want more. Perhaps I 'm wrong to speak, but there has been no chance before, and it seems to me that you 'll never need loving care more than now. I want the right to take care of you, Illyne, and protect you. You know I love

you. You must have seen it. Give me the right to help you, and promise me that when Serge is well you will be my wife."

As he poured out these words Illyne quickened her pace as if she would run away from them; but as he ended she almost stopped, and turning her face looked almost defiantly at him.

"Do you know what I am?" she asked.

"I know your story," he answered more quietly, "and I know that you are a true, brave woman. I have n't proved myself much of a man so far in my life, but if you will let me I will try in future to be worthy of you. Is it yes, Illyne?"

She had expected this, and yet she did not know what to do; absorbed in the care of her brother, she had been unable to decide what her duty was. At last she said timidly, "I cannot say yes to you now, do not press me. There is so much to think of. Since I knew you I have sometimes dared to hope for happiness. But I do not know; perhaps it is not right for me."

"Illyne!"

"No, listen; the world is very hard and strange, and I have much to learn. You must give me time; I cannot think here in the street. And now see, there is an omnibus; please call it. In a little time I will write to you."

Reluctantly he hailed the passing vehicle which had come in time to stop the passionate plea which was on his lips, but as they crossed the wide street he said, "I won't say another word, Illyne," and then in a pleading tone, "but you do love me a little?"

"Yes," she answered simply; "yes, I think I love you a great deal."

A curious place for a declaration, and one which cut off the possibility of the mutual embrace which usually follows such conversations; but we cannot always wait for a proper environment, and even if everything had been favorable, the modest story-teller would have been bound to drop the curtain. Every intelligent reader wishes to have something left to his or her imagination, and it must be a very unintelligent reader, indeed, who cannot picture the degree

of fervor which two lovers would put into such a performance.

This was Illyne's letter to Munroe, which he received the following afternoon: —

"It is hard for me to decide a matter so important for us both. I wish — oh, so much! — to do that which is right, but I fear to trust my impulses and feelings. I have to ask you if this plan is not best, — to wait for a year. If then you come to me still having your present mind, I think I may give you my heart freely. I have not slept with thinking and thinking, but I am now resolved in this. In the past year I have learned many bitter things; and perhaps, as time passes, you too may agree with the world. I do not think so, but to be prudent is better for us both. In this I beg you to agree, and that you will in this time work for the ambitions in your own country, of which you have spoken to me. Dear Serge seems much better to-day, and I am happier and more contented."

With this the young man was fain to be content; and not long after, when the Hardings had arrived, and Serge was come to a state of happy convalescence, he bade them all good-by and went back to New York, to try and get a new grip on affairs and re-establish his old relations.

CHAPTER XXVI.

SOCIETY at Nice was indebted to Prince Turgeoff for a genuine sensation. Reports were various; some said that he fired in self-defence, others that it was an old family quarrel; but certain men to whom he owed money reported that the affair was a disgraceful brawl in a common café. The last report being the worst, came finally to be generally accepted, and society began to make up its mind that once more it had been cruelly deceived. Mothers anxious to be and to do right, said to one another, "It is perfectly awful. They say he was no better than a blackleg. When undoubted rank fails us, whom can we trust?" There was much moralizing, and the thief having gone, a general locking of doors.

Later on, when the next prince knocked, they were thrown open again. He might be sus-

pected, but between that and being found out lies a mighty difference; and society is willing to take some risks for the sake of having a flavor of naughtiness and a supply of rumors to save it from flatness. Manna may sustain it for forty days in the wilderness of Lent, but a subsequent recourse to the flesh-pots is necessary to make life worth living. Of course moderation is necessary. Every one must draw the line somewhere, and society generally draws it at the cold black-and-white of the court stenographer. Brutal direct questions and replies made under oath, unless the people are very prominent, are hidden from society's daughters, and discussed by its mothers only in horrified whispers.

The career of Prince Turgeoff, the hero of an hundred scandals, was ended. He cared little for the opinion of his former friends. He had crossed the line of safety, and met the sanction of Nature's broken laws. Day and night the disorganized mind dwelt on the terrors of a punishment to come, and the distorted vision rested on the awful image of a white face,

with stony eyes upturned to his. A form cowering in a corner, with hands before its eyes, was all the world ever saw of this man, till death released him.

The news of the tragedy shocked Mrs. Harding beyond measure; such an ending of the young man's career was sad enough; and yet, since it must happen, why should she deny that so complete a settling of this vexed question brought a sense of relief to her mind?

"It is very, very unfortunate," she thought, "and awful; but perhaps after all it is for the best."

The pious way in which we fall in with the decrees of Providence when they happen to chime in with our views, must often be very amusing to the Devil.

"A most worthy and talented young man, and a very sad ending," said she to her husband.

"He may live," replied Mr. Harding.

"You don't say so!" exclaimed his wife.

After this she was more guarded in her expressions, and it is to be feared that she changed

her mind about the wisdom of the inscrutable acts of Providence, because Tolofski's recovery would bring about a state of things of which she could not approve. She was absolutely incapable of seeing things in any other light. She stood serene, conscious of no error, and happy in the knowledge of duty done at any cost.

To Leslie, philosophy and wisdom, perfect of its kind, availed nothing; foolishly or not, her whole soul was concentrated in a great love for this nameless man. She had passed beyond the power of argument, and was led by the promptings of her heart, which told her that she had chosen aright. To her therefore this news was a terrible shock; her nerves only just recovering from the strain of past excitement were upset completely, and she was made violently ill. Illyne, accompanied by a maid and escorted by Munroe, had gone at once to Paris. Leslie could not talk to her mother; Fred had returned to America to accept a position in a banker's office, and there was no one but Nora. To her she poured out her feelings, and the good girl,

never tired of listening, did what she could to cheer her young mistress with words of hope.

As the news from Paris became more reassuring, Leslie's strength came back, till finally she summoned her father for consultation, and announced that within the week she should start for Paris.

Mr. Harding had watched her carefully, and in his deliberate way made up his mind that it was necessary to take sides. The depth of Leslie's feeling for Tolofski was evident to him, and though he considered the man's birth sufficient ground to break off the affair, he could not bring himself to cross his daughter's wishes. Her cry of "I don't care" meant more to the loving father than it did to Mrs. Harding. He therefore decided to shut his eyes to facts, and come out boldly on her side.

When therefore the question which Mrs. Harding supposed settled came up again, she found that besides a girl in love, there was an indulgent father to contend with. It was a most solemn and distressing moment. There was no shadow of an inclination on her part to

yield or change her views, but Leslie simply retired behind Mr. Harding, and was safe. With her husband Mrs. Harding used every form of argument and appeal, until she was irritated and tired out with the useless effort to affect a mind so absolutely and sinfully stubborn.

Mr. Harding closed the one-sided discussion by saying, "I have promised Leslie that she shall go to Paris."

Back to Paris accordingly the Harding family went, and again the well-worn trunks were carried to their hotel on the Champs Elysées. And now for the first time in her life Mrs. Harding became morose and thoroughly unhappy. For the first time she was forced to do what she did not wish to do, and to countenance a proceeding against which her whole nature rebelled. She soon learned the uselessness of talking, and when it came to a proposition that Leslie, after a year's engagement, — during which they should all go back to America, — should marry Tolofski, she merely said to her husband: —

"You know my opinion. If you consent to

disgrace your family, I cannot help it; but I tell you plainly that I wash my hands of the whole matter. Leslie may be your daughter, but she is n't mine from this time on."

Nor did this good woman change her mind. She was beautifully consistent to the last, and always spoke with perfect frankness to the world at large about her daughter's unfortunate marriage.

"I did my best to prevent it," she would say; "but Leslie was stubborn, and her father weak. Yes, she has children, I believe, but I have never seen them."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE year has past. Love darting back and forth between the continents has kept bright the fires which he had kindled. It is arranged that Munroe shall go to Europe and bring back his bride to attend her brother's wedding.

Illyne's fears and scruples have all vanished, and the lovers are together. They are sitting under a great linden-tree, looking out on the placid waters of Lake Como. The soft light is fading slowly, and the shadow of the mountain opposite is spreading itself into the lake. Presently one of the boats which ply these waters steams noisily past, apparently bent on giving an air of bustle and activity to this quiet, restful scene. A vain attempt. The great mountain pays no attention to it; not a leaf of the tall linden-tree rustles; the

gentle water closes quietly on its fussy track, and the small disturbance distributes itself into ever-widening circles which soon settle with a little splash and gurgle on the stones, leaving the lake the same blue mirror which it was before.

The sky is growing darker. Opposite, against the black hillside, the lights of a village begin to twinkle; here and there above appears the faint glint of a golden star. The garden behind them grows more shadowy and motionless, till at last out of the silence come the voices of the bells, falling softly from the tall tower of the village church; and then as the last sound dies away they hear from a distant clump of trees the first sensuous, inviting call of the night-bird.

> "What a melting bridal carol
> Sings the nightingale, the pure one!
> How the fire-flies in the grasses
> Trip their sparkling torch-light dances!"

Still the lovers tarry, unmindful of the gathering gloom. For them the day has only just begun. Disturbing glimpses of the outside

world pass quickly, and the blessed peace and happiness of hopes fulfilled drive all unpleasant thoughts away.

At last Illyne rouses herself with a start, and springs to her feet.

"Why, Stanley, how dark it is! How could you let me stay out so long?"

They take a few steps to the wall that guards the garden from the lake, and stand looking out. Suddenly the moon shows her silvery edge over the top of the hill, and presently, sailing into full view, casts a path of shimmering light across the water to their feet.

Illyne, with one hand resting on the wall, looks dreamily out into this world of beauty.

"How lovely! How lovely!" she murmurs.

"And are you happy?" asks Munroe, taking her hand.

She turns to him, and the brown eyes fill with the light of her great love and trust as they meet his. She puts both arms about his neck, and whispers in reply,—

"More happy, dearest husband, than in my wildest dreams I ever dared to hope."

A lover's dream, say you? Not so; rather a beautiful God-given reality, a heart wide open to the influence of an honest love. As much is the rose, her petals all expanded to catch the soft caress of sun and breeze, a dream.

After this they walk hand in hand through the winding paths to the great white commonplace hotel; but even in the glare of its gilded chandeliers the love-light does not die out from Illyne's eyes. No, not there, nor anywhere in all the years to come, for the true heart and the pure life supply the fuel; and her husband, in times of future doubt and trouble or temptation, has but to look, to see the beacon which calls him safely back to that blessed haven which we call home.

Oh the conserving and redeeming power of such a love! The world can give us no true happiness where it does not come. Birth and wealth are empty things without it, and the complicated machinery and perfect code on which society depends fall to the ground, and all the way is lined with the saddening wrecks

of lives trusting for their happiness to aught else.

"And yet," says the jury, "Leslie Harding and Stanley Munroe were both fools."

Ah, well, gentlemen, never mind! They are both out of the reach of your verdict.

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